



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 15 JUL 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/14 Amid Europe heatwave, wildfires rage
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/europe-bakes-heatwave-wildfires-rage-portugal-croatia-2022-07-14/
GIST	LEIRIA, Portugal/RASLINA, Croatia, July 14 (Reuters) - Wildfires raged across tinder-dry country in Portugal, Spain, France and Croatia on Thursday, burning homes and threatening livelihoods, as much of Europe baked in a heatwave that has pushed temperatures into the mid-40Cs in some parts.

Nations across southern Europe - experiencing the second heatwave in as many months - have been hit by a series of wildfires over the last few weeks.

In Portugal's central Leiria district, tired firefighters battled to control blazes that have been fanned by strong winds. Footage from the area on Wednesday showed smoke darkening the sky and billowing across a highway, while flames licked around the roofs of houses in one small village.

"Yesterday was a very tough day," Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa said as he attended a briefing with the national meteorological institute IPMA.

"It is absolutely crucial we avoid new events because it leads to the exhaustion of firefighters and all others ... who are doing their best to control the situation."

The most concerning blaze was near the town of Pombal, where on Thursday aircraft and helicopters dropped water on flames that were tearing down a hillside lined with highly flammable pine and eucalyptus trees.

"When it gets to the eucalyptus it's like an explosion," Antonio, an elderly resident of the nearby village of Gesteira, said as he anxiously watched the approaching flames.

Across the border in western Spain, a fire that started in the Extremadura region on Tuesday swept into Salamanca province in the region of Castile and Leon, forcing the evacuation of 49 children from a summer camp on Thursday.

Regional authorities said more than 4,000 hectares (9,900 acres) of land had been burned.

Spain's meteorological agency AEMET expected the heatwave to reach its peak later on Thursday, with temperatures likely to exceed 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) in large parts of southern Spain.

THOUSANDS EVACUATED

On Croatia's Adriatic Coast, firefighting planes swooped low to dump water over burning forests, and troops were called in to help firefighters battling to contain three major wildfires around Zadar and Sibenik.

Arndt Drete, 55, had moved to the village of Raslina, near Sibenik, this year, after selling his property in Germany. His house was severely damaged by the fire.

"I bought this house in January ... I (am) cut off from Germany and this is my life here ... it was here," Drete told Reuters, showing the charred walls of his home.

In southwestern France, more than 1,000 firefighters backed by nine water-bombing planes were battling two wildfires that started on Tuesday. The fires have already burnt 5,300 hectares, a figure that has doubled over the past 24 hours.

"The situation on the ground is unfavourable, there is the scorching heat and the wind," Fabienne Buccio, prefect of the Gironde department, told local media. "And, as night is about to fall, we will not be able to use our aerial means."

She also urged tourists planning to vacation in the region to avoid the area for a few days or weeks.

One of the two Gironde fires was around the town of Landiras south of Bordeaux, where 2,400 hectares have been burnt, roads closed and 500 residents evacuated.

The other blaze, now the biggest with 2,900 hectares, was along the Atlantic Coast, close to the "Dune du Pilat" - the tallest sand dune in Europe - in the Arcachon Bay area, above which heavy clouds of dark smoke were seen rising into the sky.

Around 6,000 people were evacuated from surrounding campsites on Wednesday, and another 4,000 people early on Thursday.

A wildfire also broke out near the southeastern town of Tarascon on Thursday, burning several hundred hectares of land.

"It's the first time there is such a severe fire," in the area, the mayor of Tarascon told reporters.

'HEATWAVE HOTSPOT'

Thousands of people were also evacuated from homes on Turkey's southwestern Datca peninsula, as a fire that started on Wednesday was fanned by strong winds overnight and threatened residential areas.

The forestry minister said the fire had been brought under control on Thursday after seven firefighting aircraft and 14 helicopters were deployed to contain it. [read more](#)

Scientists blame human-caused climate change for the increased frequency of extreme weather such as heatwaves, which have also hit parts of China and the United States in recent days.

A study in the journal Nature last week found the number of heatwaves in Europe has increased three-to-four times faster than in the rest of the northern mid-latitudes, such as the United States and Canada, due in large part to the jet stream air current splitting into two parts for longer periods.

"Europe is very much affected by changes in atmospheric circulation," co-author Kai Kornhuber, a climate scientist at Columbia University, told Reuters. It's a heatwave hotspot."

Some Europeans welcomed the heat, however. In Catania, on the east coast of Italy's Sicily, tourists and locals thronged cafes to eat granita, a frozen dessert, and jumped into the sea to cool off.

"The heat here is a bit tiring, but I think it's the least tiring thing we face this year, I put up with it gladly," said Catania resident Pierpaola.

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HEADLINE	07/15 Tech workers good old days are now over?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/tech-workers-long-got-what-they-wanted-thats-over-11657877406?mod=hp_listc_pos2
GIST	<p>Tech workers used to asking for the moon are starting to hear an unfamiliar word as startups and giants such as Google and Microsoft get more cautious: No.</p> <p>For much of the pandemic, tech companies big and small went on hiring sprees where would-be employees could name their price and expect rich, work-from-anywhere perks. Now, as fears of a recession loom, more employers are scaling back or freezing hiring, rethinking how many of their positions should be remote and in some cases even rescinding job offers.</p> <p>Microsoft Corp. this week said it would lay off a small percentage of its staff, following earlier layoffs at Netflix, Coinbase Global Inc. and Twitter Inc. Alphabet Inc.-owned Google's CEO Sundar Pichai also told employees this week the company would slow the pace of hiring for the rest of the year. And the head of engineering at Meta Platforms Inc., parent of Facebook, told his managers to identify and report low-performing employees to manage them out.</p> <p>One tech worker, 40-year-old Lindsey Collins Guest, said she experienced these shifting expectations firsthand. In May she was laid off from Bolt Financial Inc., a payments-focused financial technology company, and during her search prospective employers floated base salaries that were an average 30% lower than what she had been making. She finally accepted a job with a live-streaming shopping startup that met her minimum salary requirements.</p>

“It was obvious to me that the good old days were kind of over,” Ms. Guest says.

One reason for this change in bargaining power at startups: Capital isn’t flowing as freely. As venture firms [tighten up terms](#) and investors offer [survival advice](#) to portfolio companies prepping for a downturn, startups are more focused on cutting costs than rapid growth. That means spending exorbitant amounts of money on salaries to attract new hires is coming to an end, say those who help recruit for the portfolio companies of venture capital firms.

Not all employees are at a disadvantage. After all, there are still more roles open in the industry than there are people to fill them. Job postings for tech positions reached 505,663 in June, a 62% increase over the same time a year ago, indicating employers that are dialing down hiring are more than offset by those still adding to their ranks, says CompTIA, an IT trade group. Microsoft, for example, [will still increase its head count in the coming year despite the layoffs](#).

Highly skilled workers in areas such as machine learning and artificial intelligence can still name their price, recruiters say. Nearly a third of all tech job postings in June were for software developers and engineers, according to CompTIA. The number of software development job postings that mention remote work had also risen to nearly 38% at the end of June, up from around 32% during the same period a year ago, according to Indeed.com.

The current gap between salary expectations and reality is, in part, due to how high compensation got in 2021, says Saydeah Howard, chief talent officer for IVP, the venture firm that has invested in [Dropbox](#), GitHub Inc., and [Snap](#) Inc. The 2021 increase “was outrageous” and “unseen before,” Ms. Howard says.

Candidates who want to go into an office may have an edge over those seeking remote arrangements, according to venture capitalists and recruiters. Ms. Howard said executives now tell her they prefer to hire candidates who are enthusiastic about being in the office. “Now, not all of them will say that out loud,” she says.

Some venture capitalists have been less shy about broadcasting their preference for companies who call workers back: Keith Rabois, a partner with Founders Fund, [tweeted in May](#) how he was looking to fund “IRL”—or “in real life”—startups.” Josh Wolfe with Lux Capital [last month tweeted his support](#) of [Elon Musk](#)’s [office mandate](#) for [Tesla](#) employees.

“Remote work works in remote cases,” Mr. Wolfe wrote, adding that “In tough times + coming recession people will need rapid face to face body language communication and camaraderie and signal commitment.”

Bill Gurley, a partner at Benchmark Capital and [early backer of Uber Technologies Inc. and Grubhub Inc.](#), [tweeted that the ultralow interest rate era](#) created competition for workers that led to “a [Disney](#)-esque” set of experiences and expectations.

“For employees that have only known this world, the idea of layoffs or cost reduction (or being asked to come into the office) is straight up heresy,” he tweeted. “This is not their fault. Excess capital led to excessive showering of employee benefits and heightened expectations.”

One recruiting executive, Curtis Britt with [Korn Ferry](#), said roughly 50% of the open jobs that Mr. Britt tried to fill this time last year were fully remote, and today that number is closer to 25%. Earlier in the pandemic, Mr. Britt said he helped fill 30 software engineering roles for one financial services company that was then open to remote arrangements; now that same company is pickier about where workers can live, whom it is willing to hire and how much it will pay, according to Mr. Britt.

“Their taste has gotten much more refined,” says Mr. Britt, who is vice president of projects for Korn Ferry.

	<p>Erik Duhaime, who runs Boston medical artificial-intelligence startup Centaur Labs, made similar adjustments during a recent search for a product marketing role. First Centaur Labs lowered the upper limit of the salary and experience levels it would consider. Then it scrapped the search altogether.</p> <p>“For one candidate, we told her, ‘Hey, actually, we’re sorry, but we don’t want to make an offer because we’re re-evaluating our priorities and we don’t want to be the company that makes an offer and rescinds it,’” he says.</p> <p>Centaur Labs is still hiring for mission-critical roles, including a security engineer, Mr. Duhaime says. But “we don’t have the same sense of urgency. We want to make sure we find the right person. he says. “We want to make sure we’re being very picky.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 After sharp drop, mortgage rates rise again
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/mortgage-rates-rise-again-after-recording-sharp-drop-11657807225?mod=hp_major_pos2#cxrecs_s
GIST	<p>Mortgage rates increased for the first time in three weeks.</p> <p>The average rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rose to 5.51%, mortgage-finance giant Freddie Mac said Thursday. That is up from 5.30% last week, when rates recorded the largest weekly decline since December 2008, but below the 13-year high of 5.81% recorded in June. A year ago, the 30-year mortgage averaged 2.88%.</p> <p>Higher borrowing costs are weighing on demand for homes, slowing sales and price growth. Housing affordability reached its lowest level since 2006 in May, according to the National Association of Realtors, thanks in part to higher rates. The sharp increase in rates in the first half of the year has pushed some buyers off the market.</p> <p>Mortgage applications have fallen for two weeks in a row, and sales of previously owned homes have fallen for four straight months. The country’s largest bank, JPMorgan Chase & Co., said Thursday that mortgage originations fell 45% in the second quarter from a year earlier.</p> <p>Mortgage rates are closely tied to yields on the 10-year U.S. Treasury, which fell near their lowest level in more than a month last week as investors piled into government bonds. Yields and prices move in opposite directions. Treasuries are seen as a haven during times of economic uncertainty.</p> <p>Declining demand and growing supply are reshaping the housing market at the peak of its selling season, George Ratiu, manager of economic research at Realtor.com, said in a statement. News Corp, parent of The Wall Street Journal, operates Realtor.com under license from the National Association of Realtors.</p> <p>“We can expect the pace of sales to continue to slow as we move into the second half of the year and markets regain a much-needed sense of balance,” Mr. Ratiu said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/15 Fridays are the emptiest days at the office
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/15/its-official-fridays-office-are-over/
GIST	<p>Haley LaFloure picked up a couple-dozen doughnuts on the way to work.</p> <p>She forgot it was Friday.</p> <p>The surprise she’d planned for her colleagues turned out to be on her: The office was empty. Everyone else at the St. Louis investment firm where she works had decided to close out the week from home, which meant LaFloure was stuck at her desk with enough sugary fried dough to last her a month.</p>

"I don't even like doughnuts," the 25-year-old said. "I sat down and was like, What am I going to do with these?"

As white-collar workers across the country settle into hybrid work routines, one thing is becoming clear: Nobody wants to be in the office on Fridays.

The last day of the workweek, once synonymous with long lunches and early departures, has increasingly become a day to skip the office altogether. The trend, which was already brewing before the pandemic, has become widely adopted, even codified, in recent months and is creating new challenges for employers.

Just 30 percent of office workers swiped into work on Fridays in June, the least of any weekday, according to Kastle Systems, which provides building security services for 2,600 buildings nationwide. That's compared to 41 percent on Mondays, the day with the second-lowest turnout, and 50 percent on Tuesdays, when the biggest share of workers are in the office.

"It's becoming a bit of cultural norm: You know nobody else is going to the office on Friday, so maybe you'll work from home, too," said Peter Cappelli, director of the Center for Human Resources at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. "Even before the pandemic, people thought of Friday as a kind of blowoff day. And now there's a growing expectation that you can work from home to jump-start your weekend."

So far, employers appear divided on whether to embrace a remote end to the week or to try to lure employees to the office. There are taco trucks and wine carts, costume contests and karaoke sing-offs, all aimed at getting workers to give up their couches for cubicles.

Even buttoned-up employers are learning to let loose. Citigroup has deemed Fridays "Zoom-free," while accounting giant KPMG promises "no-camera Fridays" and lets employees clock out for the weekend at 3 p.m. in the summers.

"We want to make sure people are getting a break so they can recharge their batteries," said Paul Knopp, chief executive of KPMG U.S. "We're giving them a lot more agency about how they work — and where they work."

Some start-ups and tech firms have begun doing away with Fridays altogether. Crowdfunding platform Kickstarter and online consignment shop ThredUp are among a small but growing number of firms moving to a four-day workweek that runs from Monday to Thursday.

Executives at Bolt, a checkout technology company in San Francisco, began experimenting with no-work Fridays last summer and quickly realized they'd hit a winning formula. Employees were more productive than before, and came back to work on Mondays with new enthusiasm. In January, it switched to a four-day workweek for good.

"There was no hesitation: Everybody was like, 'Sign me up,'" said Angela Bagley, the company's head of employee experience. "And it was amazing: We kept getting the job done. Managers were onboard, people kept hitting their goals. And they come back on Mondays energized and more engaged."

But for other companies, finding the right balance has been trickier.

"Employers recognize that it's tougher to get people to come back in, so they're asking, 'What can we do?'" said Julie Schweber, an adviser at the Society of Human Resource Management. "The answer is basically: If you feed them, they will come. Food trucks, special catered events, ice cream socials, that's what's popular right now."

Online Optimism, a digital marketing firm with offices in New Orleans, Atlanta and Washington, D.C., has a Friday routine of free lunches and free-flowing happy hours beginning at 4 p.m. sharp. The only rule: no shots.

Although the company has dropped all requirements for in-office work, as many as 80 percent of its 25 employees show up on days when there's free food, said chief executive Flynn Zaiger.

"Honestly, the best socializing happens on Friday," he said. "Why not have a beer or two? If people are going to be a little less productive one day of the week, I'd rather it be Friday than Monday."

Those shifting norms are rippling across the economy and reshaping business patterns for commercial real estate firms, parking garage operators and the many eateries that cater to workers during the week. The drop-off in office work, particularly on Fridays, has led coffee shops to reduce their hours, delis to rethink staffing and bars like Pat's Tap in Minneapolis to kick off happy hour earlier than ever — starting at 2 p.m.

"Since they're not at the office, people come in early to pluck away at their laptops while they sip a cocktail or two," said General Manager Dave Robinson. "By 4:30 or 5 on Fridays, we're completely full."

But lunchtime haunts that once saw large crowds on Fridays say they're struggling. The drop-off has been particularly stark at Manny's Cafeteria & Delicatessen in Chicago. Business on Fridays is down 30 percent from pre-pandemic levels.

"It's painful," owner Dan Raskin said. "Before the pandemic, Friday was the busiest day of the week — people would have an easier day at work and go out with their friends for lunch — but now it's one of the slowest."

That's also the case at LAZ Parking, which operates more than 3,000 garages nationwide. Demand on Mondays and Fridays is much lower — by about 20 percent — than it is mid-week, said Leo Villafana, the company's vice president for the Mid-Atlantic region. Wednesdays are the busiest days, though even when people do come in, they tend to stay for shorter periods.

The desire to work from home on Fridays is just about universal, said Johnny Taylor, chief executive of the Society for Human Resource Management, an industry lobby group.

"When you ask employees when they want to work from home, everyone wants Fridays," he said.

Taylor began toying with hybrid schedules in 2015, long before the pandemic forced businesses of all kinds to adapt. But his early experiments with remote Fridays were a disaster. Employees blew off their work and began winding down after lunch on Thursday. Productivity fell off a cliff.

But now, as the pandemic enters year three, norms have changed. People are more accustomed to teleworking, Taylor said. He now allows remote work on both Mondays and Fridays.

"Fridays from home have become institutionalized," he said. "There's really no turning back."

As employers confront this new reality, they're looking for more adaptable offices with more communal spaces and gathering areas instead of traditional cubicles. Think more comfy couches, coffee bars, libraries and patio work spaces.

"What people don't want is to work remotely, together, in the office," said Lenny Beaudoin, global head of workplace and design at commercial real estate services firm CBRE. "Why make the trip if I'm just logging onto Zoom, like I do at home? It's up to organizations to have better conversations and choreograph their schedules. It can't be haphazard."

Perhaps most important — even more so than free food — Beaudoin said, is the prospect of interacting with colleagues. To that end, some firms are developing apps that offer employees a quick snapshot of who will be in the office on any given day, along with planned events and other perks, so they can decide whether getting dressed and making the commute is worthwhile.

“Just like nobody likes to eat in an empty restaurant, nobody wants to go to an empty office,” he said. “When people do come in to work, they want a real social connection.”

That’s proven to be the case at MasterControl, a software firm in Salt Lake City, where employees have reconfigured their weekly rhythm to account for end-of-week slowdowns. The company’s fitness groups, including its running and biking clubs, have moved Friday gatherings to earlier in the week. Most meetings and training sessions are now on Mondays and Tuesdays, when the largest share of employees are in the office.

“Friday, the turnout is definitely much lower — you can see that just by coming into the office and looking around,” said Alicia Garcia, the company’s chief culture officer. “We’re finding that people really appreciate that flexibility.”

There are about 50 employees — out of 1,500 — at Overstock’s Utah headquarters on any given day. On Fridays, though? Hardly anybody.

The online retailer discourages meetings of any kind on Friday. Most corporate employees opt to work longer days during the week so they can take every other Friday off. But even for those who don’t, the last day of the workweek has become a much-needed respite from never-ending meetings and messages, said chief executive Jonathan Johnson.

“Fridays are the emptiest days,” said Johnson, who also works from home that day. “The office is open if people want to come but we don’t push it.”

Johnson limits himself to one Zoom meeting on Fridays, then catches up on emails, writes a weekly letter to the company’s board and plans out the coming week.

Though sometimes he makes room for more personal errands, too.

“I will admit I kicked off at 4 o’clock last Friday to get a haircut,” he said. “It tends to be a great catch-up day.”

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HEADLINE	07/14 National suicide hotline number: 988
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/07/14/suicide-hotline-988/
GIST	<p>The nationwide hotline for mental health emergencies switches to a simple 988 number on Saturday, a transition that is expected to bring millions more calls, chats and texts into a system where readiness to handle the surge varies from place to place.</p> <p>At the same time, advocates hope the renewed focus on emergency assistance, and the spending that has accompanied it, will prompt expansion of other mental health services that are in desperately short supply in many communities.</p> <p>“I look at 988 as a starting place where we can really reimagine mental health care,” said Hannah Wesolowski, chief advocacy officer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a nationwide grass-roots group. “We’re really looking at a fundamental tide shift in how we respond to people in mental health crisis.”</p> <p>The network of more than 180 local call centers, drastically underfunded throughout its history, fielded 3.6 million calls, chats and texts in the 2021 fiscal year, according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental</p>

Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Officials expect that to jump to [7.6 million contacts](#) in the coming year, as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — 800-273-TALK (8255) — gives way to 988. The 800 number will remain active indefinitely. (The expected increase in contacts doesn't include a hotline option reserved for veterans.)

The hotline in Tucson, for example, is widely considered the gold standard for comprehensive care of people suffering mental health crises. When someone calls that city's hotline, trained counselors help resolve the emergency on the phone 80 percent of the time. If they can't, one of 16 "mobile crisis teams" is dispatched to the caller's door — or any other location — day or night.

And those who need even more assistance can be brought to the [city's "stabilization center,"](#) where psychologists, doctors, nurses and other specialized personnel provide everything from urgent mental health care to drug treatment medication.

The arrangement keeps people who may be considering suicide or have other acute mental health needs out of emergency rooms and jails, reduces police and EMT involvement in behavioral health cases and speeds aid to the people who need it.

"We have the space. We have the staff. We have the training," said Margie Balfour, chief of quality and clinical innovation at Connections Health Solutions, the company that runs the Tucson stabilization center.

SAMHSA organized what had been a collection of individual call centers into a nationwide network in 2004, awarding the contract to operate and grow the system to the nonprofit Vibrant Emotional Health (then known as the Mental Health Association of New York City.)

The call centers are funded by local, state and federal resources, creating wide variation in each center's ability to handle its call volume. When local centers are swamped or understaffed, centralized backup centers across the country respond. There are 14 now and as many as 17 will be operating by August.

But local centers are preferable, because staff there are better acquainted with nearby mental health resources, officials said. Their ability to handle capacity varies substantially by location.

In the first quarter of 2022, for example, North Carolina was able to handle 90 percent of its calls in-state while Illinois responded to just 20 percent, [according to Vibrant data](#).

The overall network's capacity was able to address 85 percent of calls, 56 percent of texts and 30 percent of chats, according to a [government report](#), citing a December 2020 analysis. Already, increased hiring and spending has improved call centers' ability to keep up with demand, said John Draper, executive vice president at Vibrant.

Xavier Becerra, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, said in a briefing for reporters this month: "988 will work if the states are committed to it. It won't work well if they're not. There is no reason, no excuse, that a person in one state can get a good response and a person in another state will get a busy signal."

A lack of resources can be dangerous: The Wall Street Journal calculated recently that [1 in 6 callers hangs up without reaching anyone](#).

Research has repeatedly confirmed that call-in lines are highly effective in their mission. A trained counselor who listens to and empathizes with a caller or texter can help him or her past a short-term crisis on the phone in the vast majority of cases.

Staff and volunteers also are taught how to separate a person with thoughts of suicide from whatever might be used to commit harm, send family or friends to help, arrange follow-up care or contact law enforcement if necessary.

“Suicidal crisis callers report significant reductions in intent to die, hopelessness, and psychological pain over the course of their crisis call,” Columbia University researchers Madelyn Gould and Alison Lake wrote in a September report on 988 and suicide prevention to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors.

They added that “crisis counselors are able to secure the caller’s collaboration on an intervention on over 75% of imminent risk calls.”

SAMHSA has spent more than \$280 million to bolster the system and Congress allocated \$150 million more.

“Our goal is to make 988 like 911,” Becerra said. “If you are willing to turn to someone in your moment of crisis, someone will be there. 988 won’t be a busy signal. 988 will get you help. That is the goal.” But he made clear that the states, not the federal government, will have to fund call centers on a continuing basis.

The number of suicides in the United States rose steadily from 29,350 in 2000 to 48,344 in 2018, before declining to 45,979 in 2020, [according to the National Center on Health Statistics](#). In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and other factors, government and health officials agree that the country is in the grip of a mental health crisis, especially [among younger people](#), with sharply rising rates of depression and anxiety.

Tucson’s continuum of services grew over 20 years, a collaboration of the state, county and private participants, Balfour said. Now officials around the country point to its program as a model for other locales.

Dispatchers for the mobile crisis teams sit with 911 dispatchers and sometimes redirect calls for police to pairs of clinicians instead, Balfour said. Police are trained to bring people to the stabilization center instead of hospitals or jails when appropriate. They can be in and out in minutes, rather than spending hours with patients in an emergency room. There is a dedicated entrance at the facility for law enforcement so officers don’t have to remove and store their weapons, she said.

Available slots for follow-up care at mental health clinics are entered into the hotline’s computer, easing access to help. The hotline handles about 10,000 calls per month, Balfour said. The stabilization center handles about 1,000 adults per month as well as 200 to 300 children and teens, she said.

It has an observation area with chairs for 34 adults and 10 younger people and an adult inpatient unit with 15 beds, where patients can stay three to five days, she said, including while they withdraw from drugs and begin medically assisted treatment. The beds help prevent hours and days “boarding” in emergency rooms untreated while hospital personnel search for a bed in an appropriate facility.

The center strives for “90 minutes from door to doc” and turns away no one, including walk-ins, Balfour said. Patients may be suicidal, violent, intoxicated, psychotic or detoxifying.

“Our model is we take everybody,” she said. “We want the people that typically get denied at other places. We want those high-acuity, potentially violent people.”

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HEADLINE	07/14 Medical delivery drones to start in Tacoma
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article263468523.html
GIST	<p>Tacoma-based MultiCare announced Thursday that the nonprofit health system would partner with Zipline for the state’s first commercial medical drone deliveries.</p> <p>According to Thursday’s announcement, “Zipline’s electric, autonomous aircraft will deliver a range of medical products throughout MultiCare’s network of facilities, including hospitals, laboratories and doctors’ offices.”</p>

	<p>Health systems elsewhere have partnered with the company, using it for service such as prescription delivery.</p> <p>“MultiCare will first use Zipline’s instant delivery solution to serve facilities in the Tacoma area. The drones will deliver various medical supplies including lab samples, medications and test kits,” according to the announcement.</p> <p>“The goal of the partnership is to create a faster, on-demand delivery model for MultiCare’s providers and improve the patient experience.”</p> <p>The health system added, “Zipline’s electric fleet is the sustainable solution to increase healthcare access and convenience, reducing street congestion and cutting emissions by upwards of 96 percent when compared to standard modes of transport.”</p> <p>Deliveries with the service are set to start in 2024, “pending regulatory approvals, and will serve Pacific Northwest constituents over the next two years,” according to the release.</p> <p>Zipline, an instant logistics company, notes it has flown over 24 million miles with more than 335,000 deliveries in operations that span the United States, Japan, Rwanda and Ghana. Other corporate partners include Walmart and Toyota Tsusho, as well as government agencies and healthcare organizations worldwide.</p> <p>The release said that “on average, Zipline makes a delivery once every four minutes.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Stamp prices just went up again
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article263437778.html
GIST	<p>It just got a little more expensive to send mail in Washington state — and across the U.S.</p> <p>As of July 10, the United States Postal Service’s first-class mail “forever” stamps — commonly used to mail domestic letters — increased to 60 cents from 58 cents. Postcard stamps increased to 44 cents from 40 cents and the cost to ship international letters increased 10 cents to \$1.40, according to the Postal Service website.</p> <p>Inflation and increased operating expenses are the reasons behind the Postal Service’s new prices.</p> <p>The price increase returns for the second time in less than a year. In August 2021, postal officials increased the price of most of its first-class mail up to 10 cents to “help achieve financial sustainability.”</p> <p>The new mailing prices, announced by the Postal Regulatory Commission in June and approved by the governors of the U.S. Postal Service, raise prices more than 6% — noting it’s lower than U.S. inflation rates, according to the Postal Service website.</p> <p>Some good news: Forever stamps were designed to help customers during price fluctuations, as they represent the current price at purchase and remain good to use at any time. That means people with forever stamps purchased before Sunday are saving 2 cents a stamp.</p> <p>Along with new first-class mail prices, the Postal Service is looking to adjust its costs for certified mail, post office box rentals, money orders and mailing insurance, according to its website.</p> <p>Here are the first-class mail price increases, effective Sunday, according to the Postal Service website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-ounce letter (domestic): 58 cents to 60 cents. • Single-piece letter (extra ounce): 20 cents to 24 cents. • Metered mail one-ounce: 53 cents to 57 cents.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcard stamp: 40 cents to 44 cents. • One-ounce letter (international): \$1.30 to \$1.40.
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HEADLINE	07/15 FEMA: prepare now peak hurricane season
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/fema-urges-residents-to-prepare-for-peak-2022-hurricane-season-shares-critical-preparedness-tools/
GIST	<p>Heading into what is projected to be an above-average hurricane season, FEMA urges residents to prepare <i>before</i> the height of hurricane season.</p> <p>“My message to the public is this: identify your risks, have a plan and act today. The best way to help yourself, your family and your community recover <i>after</i> a disaster is by taking steps now, <i>before</i> it’s too late,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “Remember, just because your area was not touched by a hurricane in the past few years, does not mean it will be spared this time around. I encourage everyone to download our new and improved FEMA mobile app and start making a plan today. But most importantly, pay attention to your local officials and emergency managers for guidance on when and if to evacuate.”</p> <p>FEMA recently announced an update to its mobile app — in English and Spanish — to help users take charge of disasters. The app is available for download on iOS or Android. Watch our FEMA App video and visit the FEMA App webpage for additional information.</p> <p>Disasters can be expensive, but preparedness doesn’t need to be. Everyone can take several steps now with little to no cost that will help prepare for tropical systems. FEMA also has several resources available to help anyone who wants to design or update their preparedness plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone can visit Ready.gov, or the Spanish version Listo.gov, today for helpful tips and resources in their preparedness actions. • The Ready.gov/hurricane page also gives specific guidance to prepare for tropical systems. • FEMA’s Ready Campaign recently published a low and no-cost preparedness webpage with tips to help preparedness for a variety of disasters and emergencies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Building your emergency supply kit over time, starting with items you may already have in your home — like a flashlight, extra batteries, copies of important documents, water and non-perishable food. ○ Talking with family or members of your household about where you will go if told to evacuate. ○ Storing important documents and items like passports, birth certificates, maps and electronics in a flood-safe place, like a high shelf or upper floor in resealable water-tight plastic bags to help waterproof them. <p>Additionally, furthering FEMA’s commitment to providing accessible disaster information, the agency updated its Text-to-Shelter feature this year. When there’s an evacuation order issued, users can text “shelter” and their ZIP code to 43362 for a list of nearby shelter locations.</p> <p>If you have insurance, now is the time to review your policies. Not all policies are the same, so review them to understand what coverage you have. Homeowners insurance does not typically cover flooding, so you may need to purchase flood insurance.</p> <p>A new FEMA webpage is now available as a one-stop shop to the public about how to protect themselves and their property from the nation’s No. 1 disaster — flooding. The webpage includes free resources and information to learn about, understand and take action to reduce flood risk.</p> <p>The FEMA Map Service Center allows visitors to enter a street address to learn more about flood risks their community. Other information includes resources about flood maps, flood zones, flood risk and flood insurance.</p>

	<p>There are other multiple resources describing actions the public can take now to protect their property from hazards.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the agency’s “Before, During and After” podcast sat down with FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham at the National Hurricane Conference. You can listen to the podcast or download a transcript to learn how the agencies collaborate to share vital weather and preparedness information during a storm.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/15 Day 142 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/15/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-142-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 23 people, including three children, were killed and up to 66 others wounded after Russian missiles struck civilian buildings and a cultural centre in the city of Vinnytsia, in central Ukraine. The attack on Vinnytsia, far from the war’s front lines, occurred mid-morning on Thursday when the streets were full of people. Ihor Zhovkva, deputy head of the office of the president of Ukraine, said that “more than 70 people are still in hospital” and “18 people are missing, and the rescue operation is going on”. Eleven bodies, including two children, remain unidentified. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, called the Russian attack in Vinnytsia “an open act of terrorism”. In a video address at The Hague conference, Zelenskiy urged European and international criminal court officials to open a “special tribunal” to investigate Russia’s invasion of his country. • A top Ukrainian official said the missile attacks in Vinnytsia were an “approved military strategy” by Vladimir Putin. Mykhailo Podolyak, the head of Ukraine’s negotiating team and a key adviser to Zelenskiy, said Russian forces were attacking “peaceful” Ukrainian cities such as Vinnytsia, Kremenchuk, Chasiv Yar and Kharkiv in order to force Ukrainians to “peace at any price”, Podolyak wrote on Twitter. Russia’s attacks on peaceful Ukrainian cities were not a mistake but an approved military strategy • A four-year-old girl was killed in the Vinnytsia strike with social media posts charting her life and death. Footage – which the Guardian is not publishing – showed Liza Dmitrieva lying dead in her overturned pushchair. “A girl is among the dead today in Vinnytsia, she was four years old, her name was Liza. The child was four years old!” Zelenskiy said. “Her mother is in critical condition.” • Vitaliy Kim, governor of Mykolaiv, has said that the city’s universities have been struck by Russia this morning. • Russian and pro-Russian Luhansk People’s Republic separatist forces claim to have entered the outskirts of Siversk in Ukraine’s Donbas, the UK Ministry of Defence has said. Acknowledging that reports have not corroborated, the ministry said Russian forces have been slowly advancing westwards and probing assaults towards Siversk from Lysychansk to open a pathway onward to Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. • Russia has banned investigative news outlet Bellingcat and its partner The Insider. Russia’s prosecutor general said their activities “posed a threat to... the security of the Russian federation”. A statement said both organisations will be added to Russia’s “undesirable” list, which bans them from operating in Russia and makes cooperating with them illegal for Russian organisations and individuals. Bellingcat founder Eliot Higgins questioned how it can be applied, given that it has no official presence in Russia • New satellite images show an expanding mass grave site in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol, according to a report published by the UK-based Centre for Information Resilience (CIR). Investigators at CIR used satellite images to determine that approximately 1,400 new graves were added at the Mariupol Starokrymske cemetery between 12 May and 29 June. • The world’s largest security body has expressed “grave concern” about the alleged mistreatment of tens of thousands of Ukrainians in so-called filtration centres set up by

	<p>Russia in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of civilians are taken to these centres in the self-proclaimed breakaway Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, before being deported to Russia, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States and more than 40 other countries have agreed to coordinate investigations into suspected war crimes in Ukraine. On Thursday, 45 countries including European Union states as well as Britain, the US, Canada, Mexico and Australia at a conference in The Hague signed a political declaration to work together. With some 23,000 war crimes investigations now open and different countries heading teams, evidence needed to be credible and organised, officials said. • The US treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, has said Russia's war in Ukraine poses the greatest threat to the global economy. Representatives of Putin's regime "have no place" at a meeting of the G20 countries in Bali, she said, adding that she would continue to press allies for a price cap on Russian oil, which she said would "deny Putin revenue his war machine needs". • Canada's finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, has told Russian officials at a meeting of G20 finance leaders that she held them personally responsible for "war crimes" committed during Russia's war in Ukraine, a western official said. • Ukraine's infrastructure minister, Oleksandr Kubrakov, said Kyiv was "definitely a step closer" to reaching a deal to export grain through its Black Sea ports after talks with Russia, Turkey and the United Nations. Turkey earlier announced a deal with Ukraine, Russia and the UN aimed at resuming Ukrainian grain exports blocked by Russia. • Vladimir Putin signed into law tougher measures for individuals or entities considered "foreign agents" by Russia, as well as a new law equating defection with high treason. The new bill, which will come into force on 1 December, will broaden the definition of "foreign agents" to anyone deemed to have fallen "under foreign influence" or receiving support from abroad, not just foreign money. • Russia has begun "volunteer mobilisations" to address its soldier shortage, according to the Institute for the Study of War. In a new report, the US-based thinktank said the Kremlin had "likely ordered Russian 'federal subjects' (regions) to form volunteer battalions to participate in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, instead of declaring partial or full mobilisation in Russia".
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HEADLINE	07/15 Russia expanding mass grave site Mariupol
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/15/ukraine-1400-graves-dug-at-mariupol-cemetery-since-mid-may-images-suggest
GIST	<p>New satellite images show an expanding mass grave site in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol, according to a report published by the UK-based Centre for Information Resilience (CIR).</p> <p>Investigators at CIR used satellite images to determine that approximately 1,400 new graves were added at the Mariupol Starokrymske cemetery between 12 May and 29 June.</p> <p>CIR researchers estimate that five times more new graves are being dug each month than before the Russian invasion.</p> <p>"Our report illustrates the continuing, extreme pressure on civilian life in Ukraine, especially in occupied areas. Makeshift burials and the growing number of graves around Ukraine, particularly in and around occupied areas, is a stark illustration of the civilian death toll following the Russian invasion," said Benjamin Strick, the director of investigations at CIR.</p> <p>Russia announced in late May that it had taken control of Mariupol, after a nearly three-month siege that reduced much of the port city to smoking ruin.</p> <p>Using images captured by Planet Labs PBC, a private satellite operator, CIR estimated that by 12 May the number of graves at the Mariupol Starokrymske cemetery had increased by 1,700 since the start of the war, and by 29 June another 1,400 graves had been added, bringing the total number dug since the invasion to 3,100.</p>

Images show that during the prewar period between 21 October and 28 March, approximately 1,000 graves were added.

Since Russia captured Mariupol, the city has seen no further fighting, and the roughly 90,000 Ukrainians who remain have been left with little access to electricity, phone, internet, water or healthcare.

CIR said the increase in graves during peacetime could be explained by hundreds of bodies being uncovered under destroyed buildings in the city.

At the end of May, Petro Andryushchenko, a senior aide to Mariupol's Ukrainian mayor now operating outside the Russian-held city, said about 200 decomposing bodies had been found buried in the basement of a Mariupol high-rise.

In total, Andryushchenko estimated that 22,000 people died in the city in the two months of fighting. One person among several coordinating burials in the city previously told the Guardian that the total could be closer to 50,000.

The UN human rights office says that more than 5,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion on 24 February. Kyiv says the true number is many times higher.

Little information is known about the situation in Mariupol, which has largely been cut off from the outside world with limited mobile phone and internet connections. Images occasionally posted on the Telegram channel "Mariupol Now", which was set up by a Ukrainian volunteer to get information out of the city, show bodies being moved for burial. In one particularly gruesome picture, which the channel said was taken in June, dozens of bodies are seen lying in a parking lot.

The CIR report said the high fatality rate seen in Mariupol during the fighting for the city "correlates with Russian movements and incessant shelling within a reasonable proximity".

In Manhush, a town near Mariupol, CIR analysed a grave site that was first reported by Ukrainian officials on 21 April, when the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security in Ukraine announced that locals had found a new 30-metre mass grave.

According to CIR, Planet imagery showed an increase in activity at the grave site from 24 April to 8 May. The Ukrainian Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security alleged that 3,000 to 9,000 Mariupol residents were buried in the mass grave.

The report also analysed a graveyard in Pionerske, a settlement outside Mariupol, which the report said showed the emergence of trenches at grave sites that coincided with newly formed Russian military positions.

"In cases such as Mariupol, the emergence of multiple mass graves nearby such as Pionerske denotes the high fatality rate that correlates with Russian movements and incessant shelling within a reasonable proximity," the report said, concluding that combined with other open-source evidence, "a clear picture emerges of the Kremlin conducting their campaign in breach of international human rights conventions".

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HEADLINE	07/14 Yosemite wildfire continues to grow
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/14/yosemite-wildfire-sierra-national-forest-california
GIST	<p>The wildfire sweeping through Yosemite national park swelled to more than 4,375 acres (1,770 hectares) by Thursday morning, and is now pushing east into the Sierra national forest.</p> <p>Raging across steep and rugged terrain, firefighters have faced challenges battling the blaze, which has exhibited extreme fire behavior, officials said. Warm and dry conditions as well as dried out vegetation</p>

have upped the intensity, spurring flames that, in some areas, stretched high into the canopies of the tall trees and produced large plumes of smoke that billowed into the sky.

Winds have, however, remained light in the area where the so-called Washburn fire continues to burn. Temperatures lingered just below 100F (38C) on Thursday and relative humidity remained in double digits, aiding firefighters as they achieved roughly 23% containment on the fire.

But the blaze continues to grow, and officials said it will probably smolder through the rest of the year, until rains and snows terminate the risk completely.

“It is moving away from populated areas as it moves east, moving into the Sierra national forest,” said Stanley Bercovitz, a public information officer with the interagency team managing the fire response, adding that forest closures have been issued as a result.

The blaze erupted near the park’s famed Mariposa Grove, licking the beloved cluster of giant sequoias and sparking concerns for the ancient trees that have grown more vulnerable in the face of high-intensity flames in recent years. But so far, the grove has remained safe, in part due to prescribed burns and forest thinning treatments done in recent years to stave off the threats from high-intensity fire.

“We’ve been preparing for the Washburn fire for decades,” said Garrett Dickman, a Yosemite forest ecologist, adding that the small, targeted fires lit over the past 50 years essentially stopped the fire in its tracks when it hit the Mariposa Grove and allowed firefighters to stand their ground and set up sprinklers to further protect the world’s largest trees. “It really just died as soon as it hit the grove.”

The sequoias are adapted to fire and rely on it to survive. But more than a century of aggressive fire suppression has left forests choked with dense vegetation and downed timber that has provided fuel for large wildfires that have grown more intense during a continuing drought and exacerbated by the climate crisis.

So-called prescribed burns most recently conducted in the grove in 2018 mimic low intensity fires that help sequoias by clearing out downed branches, flammable needles and smaller trees that could compete with them for light and water. The heat from fires also helps cones open up to spread their seeds.

The treatments also help mitigate the risks that turn healthier fires into infernos. High-intensity burns and extreme fire behavior have increasingly threatened the massive trees. Once thought to be almost fireproof, up to 20% of all giant sequoias, native only in the Sierra Nevada range, have been killed in the past two years during intense wildfires.

The Washburn fire is one of 84 active blazes burning across the US, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Despite some late-season rains that delayed the onset of high-risk fire conditions in some parts of the west, the fires have already been explosive and record-breaking. More than 5.1m acres (2.1m hectares) have been torched – an amount nearly double the 10-year average for this time of year – and conditions are only expected to worsen in several states as the summer heat bakes more moisture out of the already-parched plants.

Without a reprieve in dry weather, the Washburn fire will probably burn through the season and into January, Bercovitz said. Meanwhile, firefighting preparations had already been under way in the national forest.

“We’ve brought in Sierra national forest folks from the get-go, kind of anticipating that this may happen,” said Nancy Philippe, a fire information spokesperson. Containment lines within the park, including along the edge of the grove, were holding, said Matt Ahearn, a firefighting operations official, in a video briefing earlier in the day.

The cause of the blaze is still under investigation, though it is believed to be human-caused. After igniting on 7 July, hundreds of visitors and residents from the small town of Wawona were evacuated and the

	<p>southern entrance of Yosemite remains closed. One firefighter suffered a heat injury and recovered, but no structures have been damaged.</p> <p>The rest of the park has remained open to visitors, even as the air quality declined.</p> <p>Officials are still optimistic the blaze can be corralled before conditions worsen but the tall trees and park structures remain under threat. “Until the fire is 100% controlled there is always a risk,” Bercovitz said. “It has been intense in the areas it is burning and there’s not a whole lot you can do when it’s burning like that,” he added, noting that the blaze was fueled by vegetation in areas that had not been treated with thinning or prescribed burns. “This is what happens when you stop fire for 100 years.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Study: alcohol never good for under-40
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jul/14/alcohol-is-never-good-for-people-under-40-global-study-finds
GIST	<p>Alcohol carries significant health risks and no benefits for young people but some older adults may gain from drinking a small amount, according to the largest study of its kind.</p> <p>The conclusion comes from the authors of the Global Burden of Diseases study, a rolling project based at the University of Washington in Seattle, which produces the most comprehensive data on the causes of illness and death in the world.</p> <p>Four years ago the study said that even the occasional drink was harmful to health, and suggested governments should advise people to abstain entirely.</p> <p>But after a major new analysis of global data, the experts behind the study have reached fresh conclusions. Young people face higher health risks from alcohol consumption than older adults, they say. But they add that adults aged 40 and older without underlying health conditions may benefit from limited alcohol consumption, such as a small glass of red wine a day, including a reduced risk in cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes.</p> <p>Their findings, published in the Lancet, are the first to report alcohol risk by geographical region, age, sex, and year. They suggest that global alcohol consumption recommendations should be based on age and location, with the strictest guidelines for men aged 15-39, who are at the greatest risk of harmful alcohol consumption worldwide.</p> <p>“Our message is simple: young people should not drink, but older people may benefit from drinking small amounts,” said the senior author, Dr Emmanuela Gakidou, professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington’s School of Medicine. “While it may not be realistic to think young adults will abstain from drinking, we do think it’s important to communicate the latest evidence so that everyone can make informed decisions about their health.”</p> <p>A total of 1.34 billion people are estimated to have consumed harmful amounts of alcohol in 2020, according to the analysis of drinking habits in 204 countries.</p> <p>The study, published in the Lancet, found that 59% of those who drank harmful amounts were aged 15-39 – people for whom alcohol provided no health benefit and posed risks, including injuries relating to drinking or car accidents, suicides or murders. Three-quarters of harmful drinkers were men.</p> <p>Researchers looked at the risk of alcohol consumption on 22 health outcomes, including injuries, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers, using 2020 Global Burden of Disease data.</p> <p>Using this information, the researchers were able to estimate how much alcohol a person could drink before taking on excess risk to their health compared with someone who did not drink any alcohol.</p>

They found that the level of alcohol that could be consumed without increasing health risks increased throughout a lifetime. Researchers deemed a standard drink as a 100ml glass of 13% -alcohol red wine or a 375ml can or bottle of 3.5% beer.

They found that for men aged 15-39, the recommended amount of alcohol before “risking health loss” was just 0.136 of a standard drink a day. For women of the same age, the “theoretical minimum risk exposure level” was 0.273 drinks – about a quarter of a standard drink a day.

For adults of 40 and older without any underlying health conditions, drinking a small amount of alcohol was linked to some health benefits, such as reducing the risk of ischaemic heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Among those aged 40-64, safe alcohol consumption levels ranged from about half a standard drink a day to almost two standard drinks. For those aged 65 or older, the risks of “health loss from alcohol consumption” were reached after consuming a little more than three standard drinks a day.

But on average, the recommended alcohol intake for adults over the age of 40 remained low, peaking at 1.87 standard drinks a day. After that the health risks increased with each drink, the Lancet reported.

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Separate research published in the journal PLOS Medicine on Thursday found consumption of seven or more units of alcohol a week was associated with higher iron levels in the brain. Iron in the brain has been linked to Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases and is a potential mechanism for alcohol-related cognitive decline.

Dr Richard Piper, chief executive of Alcohol Change UK, said: “The emerging science on alcohol, over hundreds of studies over the past 20 years, is telling us very clearly that alcohol is very damaging to the human body in multiple ways. We were previously unaware of this, and too many of us continue to drink as though this revolution in our knowledge hasn’t happened.

“If you care about your health, by far the best approach is not to drink at all. If you do choose to drink alcohol, listen properly to the UK’s chief medical officers, and do not exceed 14 units a week (about six pints of lager or a bottle and a half of wine), have at least three alcohol-free days a week, and never exceed more than six units in one day.”

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HEADLINE	07/15 China sells Russia needed items for military
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-firms-are-selling-russia-goods-its-military-needs-to-keep-fighting-in-ukraine-11657877403?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>BEIJING—Chinese exports to Russia of microchips and other electronic components and raw materials, some with military applications, have increased since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, complicating efforts by the U.S. and Western allies to isolate the country’s economy and cripple its military.</p> <p>Chip shipments from China to Russia more than doubled to about \$50 million in the first five months of 2022, compared with a year earlier, Chinese customs data show, while exports of other components such as printed circuits had double-digit percentage growth. Export volumes of aluminum oxide, which is used to make the metal aluminum, an important material in weapons production and aerospace, are 400 times higher than last year.</p> <p>The rise in reported export values may partly be explained by inflation. But the data shows that many Chinese tech sellers have continued to do business with Russia despite U.S. scrutiny.</p>

The Chinese exports, while just a sliver of the country's overall exports, are a source of concern for U.S. officials. The Commerce Department [added five Chinese electronics companies to a trade blacklist](#) last month for allegedly helping Russia's defense industry, both before the invasion and after it began.

"Our government and our national leadership has been very clear from February 24th on that China should not provide material, economic and military support for Russia in this war," Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, said last week.

The Commerce Department said in a written response that while it didn't believe China had sought to systematically evade U.S. export controls on Russia, it was closely monitoring trade between the countries and "will not hesitate to employ our full legal and regulatory tools against parties that provide support to the Russian military."

The China-Russia trade in chips and other components with potential military applications involves both small, private outfits and sprawling state-owned enterprises. Incomplete data and complex networks of subsidiaries and middlemen make it hard to trace all the activity.

Chinese officials have said the country isn't selling weapons to Russia. And overall exports from China to Russia have fallen substantially this year as many Chinese companies fear running afoul of the U.S. China's support, broadly speaking, is critical to Moscow. Oil and gas revenues make up a sizable chunk of Russia's economy. As European nations such as Germany seek to draw down Russian energy purchases, Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) has stressed the importance of selling far more energy to China and others in Asia in the future.

China is also gaining leverage in its relationship with Russia. While China historically has relied on Russia, and before that the Soviet Union, for many advanced technologies, that is gradually changing as China closes the technology gap and emerges as a defense exporter in its own right.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has repeatedly reaffirmed Beijing's support for Russia, saying the two countries share [a friendship with "no limits."](#)

A shared dissatisfaction with the U.S.-led post-World War II international system has gradually driven the countries together during Mr. Xi's decade in power, despite [a long history of strategic mistrust](#).

Researchers at C4ADS, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that tracks security threats, have been looking at trade between Russian defense firms and China Poly Group, a conglomerate controlled by China's central government.

Poly's subsidiaries include a key Chinese weapons producer and exporter of small arms, missile technology and, more recently, antirone laser technology.

Between 2014 and January 2022, C4ADS researcher Naomi Garcia identified 281 previously undisclosed shipments of so-called dual-use goods, which have both civilian and military uses, from Poly subsidiaries to Russian defense organizations, she writes in a report to be released Friday.

In one of the most recent shipments, in late January, according to the research, Poly Technologies sent antenna parts to sanctioned Russian defense company Almaz-Antey. Ms. Garcia said she hasn't discovered Poly shipments to Russian defense firms since the Ukraine invasion began in late February.

Russian customs records reviewed by C4ADS say the antenna parts were specifically to be used in a radar that is part of Russia's advanced S-400 surface-to-air missile system. Russian media, citing the country's Defense Ministry, has said the S-400 system has been used in the Ukraine war.

"Poly Technologies is undeniably facilitating the Russian government's acquisition of missile-system parts," Ms. Garcia said.

Poly Technologies was sanctioned by the State Department in January for engaging in proliferation of missile technologies. A State Department spokesperson said the sanctions were related to the company's transferring of ballistic-missile technology to another country, but didn't name which country.

Poly didn't reply to a faxed request for comment and an official in its press office hung up when asked about its work with Russia. Almaz-Antey, Russia's Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Industry and Trade didn't respond for comment.

Beyond radar components and semiconductors, Chinese exporters also have helped fill a gap in basic materials that Russia is restricted from sourcing elsewhere.

In March, Australia prohibited the export of aluminum oxide and several other related products, citing their use in weapons development. Since then, Chinese exports of aluminum oxide to Russia have surged, hitting 153,000 metric tons in May, according to Chinese customs records, compared with 227 metric tons in the same month the year before.

Unlike state-owned conglomerate Poly, the Chinese companies that were targeted most recently by the Commerce Department are small, private hardware distributors run out of Hong Kong and China's southern province of Guangdong. While there is relatively little information about the size of business they do with Russia, some of the companies named by the U.S. openly advertised their defense work.

One of the firms, Winninc Electronics Co., previously said on its website that it was a top distributor "for industrial, military, aerospace, and consumer electronics manufacturers worldwide." That language has since been removed. "Hope we can get through this," the website now says.

Another of the targeted companies, Sinno Electronics Co., also until recently said on its website that it was a "cooperative partner" of publicly traded U.S. hardware manufacturers including Texas Instruments Inc. and Analog Devices Inc.

Texas Instruments didn't respond to requests for comment. Analog Devices said it isn't a partner of Sinno. It added that it had instructed its distributors to cease business with the company after the Commerce Department's decision to blacklist it.

Sinno didn't respond to a request for comment. A person who answered the phone at Winninc said the company wasn't informed about the U.S. decision before it was made public but declined to comment further.

Maria Shagina, an expert on Russia sanctions at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Berlin, said the latest action against the Chinese companies appeared to be intended to show that U.S. threats were credible, particularly considering how smaller companies may be better able to circumvent export controls than bigger ones.

"While the U.S. and its allies failed at deterrence with Russia, it's important to prevent China early enough from systematically helping Russia," she said.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Euro slips below dollar; economic slump
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/euro-slides-below-dollar-reflects-europes-sinking-economic-fortunes-11657805525?mod=hp_list_pos5
GIST	<p>The euro's slide below parity with the U.S. dollar reflects Europe's sinking economic fortunes in the face of the war in Ukraine. But unlike the last time the euro was this weak 20 years ago, nobody is coming to the common currency's rescue.</p> <p>The euro depreciated by 0.4% against the dollar Thursday. While it closed above parity, one euro recently bought \$0.9981, the common currency's weakest level since 2002. The euro has been on a steady decline</p>

[this year](#), and the selloff intensified in recent days as investors girded for Russia to enact [a full-blown gas cutoff](#) that many fear will drive the region into a deep recession. Driving the euro even further lower on Thursday was [a brewing political crisis in Italy](#).

Reaching parity—when two currencies are equal in value—is largely symbolic for investors, and is expected to have a limited impact on financial markets. But a weak euro does affect the region's economy. It drives up the cost of imports and fans Europe's already high inflation rate while making what Europe exports cheaper in international markets.

“What it is indicative of is that this is a horrific situation for the eurozone,” said James Athey, investment director at Abrdn, who thinks the euro could fall to 90 U.S. cents or below in the short term. The weak euro evokes memories of the euro's first years of existence in the early 2000s. The newly minted currency traded below parity with the dollar and was gripped by a “confidence crisis,” said Carsten Brzeski, chief eurozone economist at ING.

Back then, [global central banks were forced to step in](#) to help stem the slide in the euro, which policy makers feared would hurt the global economy. It took almost three years for the euro to fully find its way back above parity. It has traded stronger than the dollar ever since, even throughout the early 2010s sovereign-debt crisis that nearly tore the bloc apart.

This time, the euro's weakness is less about confidence in the euro as a currency than about a set of economic realities, including the bloc's energy woes, Mr. Brzeski says.

The weak euro is also the flip side of [the broad strength of the U.S. dollar](#), which buys more today compared with other currencies than it has in a generation.

Crucially, U.S. policy makers have signaled they are relaxed about a strong dollar, which helps in the battle against soaring inflation. That makes a coordinated intervention by central banks [to support the euro less likely](#).

Driving the dollar has been an aggressive Federal Reserve, more intent on raising interest rates to fight inflation than other central banks. Cash tends to gravitate to economies that offer a combination of growth prospects and higher interest rates. Fed Chair Jerome Powell told congressional leaders last month that a strong dollar could help reduce inflation.

The European Central Bank has kept the euro under pressure by moving more slowly to increase interest rates than the Fed.

The euro has lost more than a 10th of its value versus the dollar this year, and briefly dipped just below \$1 on Wednesday on some, but not all, foreign-exchange trading platforms. Unlike stocks, there is no centralized pricing for currency trading. On Thursday, the euro fell below parity according to broker Tullett Prebon, which provides data to The Wall Street Journal.

The ECB is expected to lift its key interest rate by one-quarter of a percentage point next week, to minus 0.25%, marking its first rate increase in more than a decade. After [this week's soaring inflation report](#), the Fed, in contrast, is expected to increase its policy rate by as much as an entire percentage point to a range of 2.5% to 2.75% this month.

A weaker euro makes Europe's exports cheaper while helping to [lure overseas tourists](#) to the beaches and resorts of Greece and Spain. That export-boosting effect is being eaten up by a large increase in the price of the continent's imports, especially energy and raw materials, many of which are priced in dollars, analysts say. Those price increases are driving up inflation across the currency bloc.

“The extreme price increases in import and producer prices overshadow any profit that exporters can book for themselves due to a weaker currency,” said Sonja Marten, head of foreign exchange and monetary policy research at DZ Bank in Frankfurt.

Cheap Russian energy has been a key crutch of Europe's industrial power. Now, investors fear that Russia will use [maintenance that began Monday](#) on the Baltic gas pipeline Nord Stream as an opportunity to cut off those gas flows to Germany for good.

Despite efforts to reduce its dependence on Russia in the wake of that nation's invasion of Ukraine, the European Union still relied on Russia for about 20% of its gas supply in June, according to [Brussels think tank Bruegel](#). Russia has cut off supplies to EU member states including Poland, Bulgaria and Finland and reduced flows to Germany.

The weak euro complicates the ECB's task of controlling inflation.

Some ECB officials have signaled publicly in recent weeks that they would like to see a stronger euro, suggesting that the bank might be ready to increase rates more aggressively. The ECB's chief economist, Philip Lane, highlighted the weakness of the euro at [the bank's latest policy meeting in June](#), and ECB officials kept the door open at that meeting to a larger interest-rate increase this month, according to the minutes, which were published last week.

But the ECB's pushback has been limited, suggesting that policy makers are relatively relaxed about the euro's short-term price movements.

For the ECB, "it is not the absolute level of the exchange rate that is decisive, but the dynamics and speed of the movement," said Ms. Marten. "A premature intervention in a fundamentally driven market could fizzle out and thus endanger the reputation of the ECB."

Any move to increase rates sharply could threaten to intensify the longstanding imbalances within the bloc that drove the sovereign-debt crisis.

Borrowing costs in Southern Europe surged by much more than those in Germany after the ECB unveiled plans in May for a gradual series of interest-rate increases. Those yields have fallen in recent weeks after the ECB announced last month that it was developing a new bond-buying tool to prevent "fragmentation" among countries, which it is expected to unveil after its July 21 policy meeting.

Kiran Ganesh, a multiasset strategist at [UBS](#), believes the euro will recover against the dollar as the market focus shifts to the prospect of the Fed cutting rates to cushion a slowing economy. On top of that, the euro's cheapness will eventually bring buyers back.

"If the dollar gets too strong, then at some point the U.S. starts to lose some appeal as an investment destination because everything gets expensive for overseas investors," he said. "In the end things do get too cheap in Europe as compared to the U.S."

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HEADLINE	07/15 China president rare visit to restive region
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-made-rare-visit-to-xinjiang-11657827803?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping this week made a rare appearance in the troubled region of Xinjiang, his first visit there in over eight years and his second trip in two weeks aimed at demonstrating national unity after touring Hong Kong, as he seeks to lengthen his rule.</p> <p>Early Friday, state media outlets carried about 1½ minutes of China Central Television footage showing Mr. Xi in government offices, a museum, classrooms and a trade zone in the Xinjiang capital Urumqi. Mr. Xi was greeted by musicians and dancers in dress traditionally worn by members of the mostly Muslim Uyghur minority, an ethnic group targeted by what the U.S. and other Western governments say is a vast forced assimilation program.</p>

State media later released a short clip that showed Mr. Xi stopping in the city of Shihezi, where he visited a unit of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a quasi-military organization established in the 1950s to help develop the frontier region. Also known as Bingtuan, the XPCC has been [hit by Western sanctions](#) in recent years aimed at crimping its business interests, including the export of cotton, over its alleged role in the assimilation campaign.

On Wednesday, Mr. Xi told Bingtuan personnel that their organization plays an irreplaceable strategic role while inspecting local facilities, including a museum and farmland.

China's government denies it mistreats its ethnic minorities and says Xinjiang policy is a domestic matter. The brief reporting about Mr. Xi's visit appeared to emphasize national unity instead of ethnic divisions.

The surprise visit caps an almost two-week period in which Mr. Xi hasn't appeared in state media making a public appearance, an unusually long time for China's top leader to be out of view. This year is critical for Mr. Xi politically as he completes what analysts predict will be his bid to remain in power for a third term. China's government often withholds news of Mr. Xi's travels until his trip is concluded.

The trip to Xinjiang came on the heels of [Mr. Xi's visit over two days to Hong Kong](#) in late June to mark 25 years since the former British colony returned to Chinese sovereignty. It was Mr. Xi's first visit there since Beijing imposed a strict national security law that critics including the U.S. government say curtailed rights in the once freewheeling city.

Mr. Xi isn't known to have visited Xinjiang since evidence began emerging that the Chinese government had expanded [a yearslong campaign of forcible assimilation and omnipresent surveillance](#) by holding members of the region's mostly Muslim ethnic minorities in mass-detention internment camps.

The Chinese leader toured Xinjiang in April 2014 when, in the wake of violent incidents elsewhere in China that Beijing blamed on ethnic separatists including Uyghurs from Xinjiang, he ordered military personnel in the region to "strike first" at terrorists. Hours after that four-day visit ended, Chinese media reported [an attack involving knives and explosives](#) at an Urumqi railway station that left several people dead.

By 2018, Western human rights groups, governments and media were documenting evidence that surveillance of Uyghurs and some members of other ethnic minorities had been vastly stepped up in Xinjiang and some were being mass-detained in [internment camps](#) and others subject to forced labor. Estimates of those detained later topped one million.

Beijing has described the facilities as vocational schools. This month, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said, "Xinjiang-related issues are of major concern to China. The so-called forced labor in Xinjiang is an outrageous lie from the U.S. side to smear and contain China."

Shortly before leaving office in January 2021, the Trump administration declared China's activity in Xinjiang as genocide, a term the Biden administration has since adopted.

Western governments have also imposed economic sanctions on some Chinese officials involved in Xinjiang policy, and [cut trade and investment links](#) to the region. The U.S. and some allies diplomatically boycotted [this year's Winter Olympics in Beijing](#) in protest over Xinjiang policy, as well as China's policies toward Hong Kong.

In the brief report on Mr. Xi's latest trip to Xinjiang, media said its purpose was an opportunity for the president to understand Xinjiang's strengthening of talent, Covid-19 control, economic and social development, and reinforce the Chinese nation's unity. A poster behind elderly people in Uyghur clothing who danced for Mr. Xi read: "All ethnicities are one loving family; collectively building the China Dream with one heart," using one of Mr. Xi's favored slogans.

	<p>Mr. Xi has stayed away from Xinjiang in recent years in a bid to create distance between China's central government and the atrocities that have taken place, said Salih Hudayar, the Washington, D.C.-based prime minister of a self-declared government-in-exile for East Turkistan. He interpreted Mr. Xi's emphasis on local communities during the visit as signaling a more "micro-level emphasis" on control for people in the region.</p> <p>Separately, Omer Kanat, an ethnic Uyghur who directs the Uyghur Human Rights Project in Washington, in an email criticized the president's visit. "To see Uyghurs smiling and dancing in front of the man responsible for atrocities is difficult to bear, especially given how far the government has gone to erase genuine expressions of culture," he wrote.</p> <p>Mr. Xi made an effort to be seen as working to preserve the culture of minority populations during his trip, said Georgetown University historian James Millward, author of "Eurasian Crossroads," a history of the Xinjiang region.</p> <p>"This is likely a response to ample evidence and international criticism of PRC policies that have repressed cultural expression and bulldozed non-Chinese traditional architecture," Mr. Millward said, referring to the People's Republic of China.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Italy's unity government teeters
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/europe/italy-mario-draghi-confidence-vote.html
GIST	<p>ROME — Italy's golden period of stability suddenly seemed on the familiar precipice of chaos on Thursday after Prime Minister Mario Draghi tendered his resignation in response to a revolt by anti-establishment populists within his broad national unity government.</p> <p>But in a sign of how traumatic Mr. Draghi's departure would be for Italy, the country's president refused to accept his resignation, essentially freezing the political situation in place until next week, when Mr. Draghi will address Parliament.</p> <p>The unexpected government crisis, and the theatrics and behind-the-scenes machinations, left Italy in a state of suspended animation and created a potential calamity for Europe as it seeks a united front against Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and faces a wave of Covid infections and an energy crisis.</p> <p>On Thursday night, Italy's politicians and analysts struggled to figure out exactly what had happened — and what would happen next. Despite Mr. Draghi's stated intention to resign, it remained possible that he could remain in power if key political players rejected the temptation to bolt and fall back in line.</p> <p>Among them is the man who triggered the revolt, former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte of the Five Star Movement.</p> <p>But the day's events also made clear that the gravity of scheduled elections in early 2023 would continue to pull all the parties apart, and that Mr. Draghi, who had made government unity a condition of his staying on, may yet insist on quitting.</p> <p>In tendering his resignation, Mr. Draghi had said that "the majority of national unity, which supported this government since its inception, no longer exists."</p> <p>Italy's president, Sergio Mattarella, "did not accept the resignation," according to a statement from Mr. Mattarella's office, and instead invited Mr. Draghi to speak to Parliament in the coming days to address "the situation that has arisen."</p> <p>Most agreed that the next five days, ahead of Mr. Draghi's speech in Parliament to explain his reasoning, would be crucial.</p>

“There are five more days to work so that Parliament can confirm its confidence to the Draghi government and Italy can exit the dramatic tailspin it is entering right now,” Enrico Letta, the leader of the Democratic Party, said in a Twitter post.

If Mr. Mattarella or the political parties that would like the government to continue cannot convince Mr. Draghi to stay, it would mean instability not just for Italy but for all of Europe, and at a precarious time. The European Union, of which Mr. Draghi is a fervent advocate, is struggling to keep unity in the face of the aggression in Ukraine by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

After Mr. Draghi took office in early 2021, when Italy’s president asked him to resolve a political crisis created by the collapse of Mr. Conte’s government, he led the country out of the worst days of the Covid pandemic and packed the government with highly accomplished experts who shook Italy out of its political and economic malaise.

Mr. Draghi, a titan of Europe often called Super Mario for his role in saving the euro as president of the European Central Bank, immediately boosted Italy’s international standing and investor confidence.

The promise of his steady hand at the wheel helped Italy receive more than 200 billion euros, or about \$240 billion, in relief funds from Europe — a transformational sum that gave Italy its best chance at modernization in decades.

Mr. Draghi brought moderate growth to Italy, made reforms to its justice system and tax code, streamlined Italy’s bureaucracy, and found diverse sources of energy away from Russia, including renewables.

Along the way, he made populism unfashionable and competence admirable, and he repositioned Italy as a reliable force for democratic values within Europe.

Perhaps most crucially, he played a significant role in pushing Italy, which has often maintained a close, transactional and ambiguous relationship with Russia, into the European mainstream on questions of support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Italy was the first major Western nation to publicly support Ukraine’s eventual membership in the European Union.

The potential departure of Mr. Draghi opens the door to forces who are much more sympathetic to Mr. Putin.

Matteo Salvini, the nationalist leader of the League party who once wore shirts with Mr. Putin’s face on them, and whose popular support and institutional influence has waned over the last two years, suddenly mattered again.

While Five Star, after triggering the crisis, seemed willing to perhaps support the government after all, Mr. Salvini, who has also made enormous demands on Mr. Draghi, now had reason to declare the government over, allowing him to return, without necessarily accepting the blame, to the campaign footing he excels on.

“If a coalition party doesn’t back a government decree that’s it, enough is enough,” Mr. Salvini said on Italian television. “It seems clear that we should go to elections.”

He is not the only Italian political force that would welcome Mr. Draghi’s departure and the ushering in of early elections.

“With Draghi’s resignation, for Brothers of Italy, this legislature is over,” said Giorgia Meloni, the hard-right leader who has stayed in the opposition and seen her popularity skyrocket over the last year and a half. “This Parliament no longer represents Italians. We will fight to return to the Italian people what the citizens of all other democracies have: the freedom to choose who represents them. Elections immediately.”

The revolt by what remained of the once powerful and anti-establishment Five Star Movement was led by Mr. Conte, who has made a habit of demanding concessions from Mr. Draghi for his continued support.

He has argued that the government has not set aside enough funds for a cost of living package. Five Star — which is traditionally close to Russia — has also opposed sending significant military support to Ukraine in response to the Russian invasion.

This time it was over a relief bill for soaring energy costs that included a garbage incinerator in Rome that Five Star found unacceptable.

Mr. Draghi, after days of seeking a compromise with Mr. Conte, opted for a confidence vote early Thursday in an effort to call Mr. Conte's bluff. This time Mr. Conte led his party in a walkout.

Though the government survived — by a vote of 172 to 39 — Mr. Draghi had made clear that he would not lead a unity government that had no unity. Convinced that the coalition was no longer tenable, he decided the time had come for him to leave as well.

“In the past few days, on my part I put the utmost effort to continue on the common path, even trying to meet the needs that had been advanced by the political parties,” Mr. Draghi said in his announcement of resignation, adding that unity was “fundamental in tackling the challenges of the past few months. These conditions are no longer there. I thank you for your work, the many results achieved.”

Five Star, whose support crumbled after a chaotic spell running the government and Mr. Draghi's succession, would most likely suffer terribly if Italy held new elections. But as the 2023 deadline for elections draws nearer, Five Star also has less to lose, and Mr. Draghi's government was expected to face more internecine fighting and instability in any case.

It arrived sooner than expected, though it was not entirely surprising that the threat came from Mr. Conte.

Mr. Conte, a lawyer plucked from obscurity by Five Star and the League to lead the government in 2018, has struggled to find his footing as a political leader of what is left of Five Star.

He is still bitter, members of Parliament say, over being pushed out as prime minister in 2021, when he was replaced by Mr. Draghi, and he is desperate to rebuild a party that has wasted away, hemorrhaging half of its support.

The Five Star leader who brought him in as prime minister — Luigi Di Maio, the current foreign minister — quit the party last month, taking dozens of members with him. Mr. Di Maio, a onetime firebrand, now follows in Mr. Draghi's footsteps and speaks about the importance of NATO, clearly seeing his future in the establishment.

Mr. Conte has struggled to signal to his unsatisfied supporters that he can deliver on their interests. He speaks in legalistic terms, is often inconsistent and has the added headache of constantly trying to appease the party's often inscrutable founder, Beppe Grillo.

“The scenario has changed,” Mr. Conte told reporters after failing to reach a compromise during talks with Mr. Draghi on Wednesday. “We need a different phase.”

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HEADLINE	07/15 Strategy gaps in arms supplies to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/15/world/europe/europe-ukraine-arms-weapons-supplies.html
GIST	BRUSSELS — There is the war on the ground in Ukraine and the war over weapons supplies, on which the first war depends.

In the weapons war, there is a significant disparity between the flood of arms supplied by Britain, Poland and the United States, and what the rest of Europe is providing, which has raised the persistent question of whether some countries are slow-walking supplies to bring about a shorter war and quicker negotiations.

[Those whispers](#), coming most loudly from countries on NATO's eastern flank, closest to the war, have not stopped despite the very [public visit to Kyiv in June by some of Europe's top leaders](#) — from France, Germany and Italy — aimed at reassuring the Ukrainians of their support.

If anything, the suspicions have intensified, as the [economic pain of the war](#) is felt more deeply in the West, the conflict enters a new phase of attrition and concerns ebb that the fighting will spill into Western Europe — unless, perhaps, Russia feels cornered and humiliated.

Taken as a whole, the West is providing Ukraine “just enough” weaponry “to survive, not enough to regain territory,” said Ulrich Speck, a German foreign-policy analyst. “The idea seems to be that Russia should not win, but also not lose.

“What countries send and how slowly they send it tells us a lot about the war aims of Western countries,” he added. “And it becomes even more important now because [Ukraine is more dependent on Western arms](#).”

Western European nations blame logistics and a reluctance to deplete national stockpiles for their slow contributions. Beyond that, there are also broad divisions in European strategic thinking about whether Russia should be punished, isolated or, eventually, accommodated.

New data from the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, which has been [regularly tracking bilateral contributions](#) of money, weapons and aid from all countries to Ukraine, [show that](#) the major shortfall between promises and deliveries of weapons comes from the countries of Western Europe, especially Germany.

The figures are current through July 1 and given in euros, but roughly the same in dollars since the currencies are at parity. They are not perfect, given that some countries, like France, which is shown to have promised and delivered only 160 million euros' worth of equipment, prefer to keep most of the details of their deliveries secret.

They also show the United States has announced considerably more military aid — 6.37 billion euros — than has been delivered so far. But even so, the amount Washington has delivered — 2.4 billion euros — is more than any other country.

By contrast, Germany, which has faced sharp criticism for slow deliveries, has delivered only 290 million euros of equipment while promising 620 million.

It lags even Poland, which has promised and delivered 1.8 billion euros; and certainly Britain, which has delivered 1 billion euros' worth of its promised 1.12 billion.

Much of the weaponry delivered by Poland and other countries formerly under Soviet occupation came from Soviet-era stockpiles.

West European officials argue that they are reluctant to deplete their own arsenals, given the requirement of self-defense. (Germany, for instance, [has only some 250 working tanks](#) right now, down from the thousands West Germany had during the Cold War.)

But not all are convinced.

“The Kiel numbers are quite shocking, to be honest,” said Guntram Wolff, an economist and the new director of the German Council on Foreign Relations. European support levels are below 0.2 or 0.3 percent

of gross domestic product, he said. “On the one hand, it’s a lot of money, but it’s also quite small given what’s at stake” — given Russia’s effort “to take over another country in Europe.”

The numbers underscore that Germany and France, in particular, have a different strategic aim than Washington, believing that a nuclear-armed Russia is too big and dangerous to be defeated in any significant way, and that its president, Vladimir V. Putin, should not be cornered.

In a controversial French television documentary showing some behind-the-scenes footage of President Emmanuel Macron and his advisers dealing with the outbreak of the war, their shock and bewilderment are clear after Mr. Putin lies to them, four days before the invasion, about being open to another round of diplomacy.

Mr. Macron has said twice that “Russia must not be humiliated,” upsetting the Ukrainians. But the footage shows him repeating that thought on a train leaving the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, even after he and the German, Italian and Romanian leaders visited President Volodymyr Zelensky in mid-June.

At the end of the film, “A President, Europe and the War,” Mr. Macron says he worries about “a growing tone, more Anglo-Saxon, saying that we must annihilate Russia, weaken it permanently.”

But that is not Europe’s aim, he said. “We are here to help Ukraine win, to protect its territory and its independence. We are not here to fight against Russia, even less to annihilate it.”

His words infuriated the Ukrainians as well as the Central Europeans, who want Russia weakened and Mr. Putin humiliated.

For Pierre Vimont, a former French ambassador to Washington and former senior E.U. official, European countries are divided into three rough camps.

There are those like Britain, Poland and the Baltics looking to isolate Mr. Putin and the Russians, too, for being complicit in the war; those like Belgium, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands revisiting the idea of Cold War containment, talking of constraints; and those countries, like France, Germany, Hungary and Italy, “who hope at some point for an opportunity to launch a new dialogue with Russia, not immediately, but to be ready.”

The divisions will remain, Mr. Vimont said. “There is not much appetite for a Russian strategy.”

If there is to be one, Washington must lead it, but seems as confused as everyone else. “No one has a real idea of how to handle this situation now,” Mr. Speck said. Unlike in 2014, when Germany organized the Minsk process to stop the war then, he said, “there is no one driving a diplomatic process.”

As the war settles into a protracted artillery battle with little terrain won or lost, the threat that Russia will attack Western European countries is rapidly fading, said Claudia Major, a defense expert with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

That is leading to a certain complacency, coupled with the growing economic impact of sanctions on higher inflation and lower growth.

Comparing estimates for European growth and inflation last autumn with those issued on Thursday, projected growth is down roughly 4 percent to only 2.7 percent this year and 1.5 percent for 2023. Projected inflation is up to 8.3 percent this year and 4.6 percent for 2023. There are worries about recession.

When Russia invaded, there was popular shock and fear, and the German swing toward more military spending, its “Zeitenwende,” was more about self-defense than about helping Ukraine, which was not expected to put up such a good fight, Ms. Major said. “It was 100 billion euros for us, not for Ukraine,” she said.

There was more optimism in the second phase, when Ukrainian forces beat back the Russians from Kyiv and Western weapons shipments transitioned from anti-tank missiles, so useful then, to tanks and artillery.

But now, she said, there is the “attrition phase, and we in Western Europe are more optimistic that the war won’t arrive in Germany but will stay in Ukraine.”

Those countries closest to the battle have emptied their stocks to give to Ukraine, she said, “and we, in Germany and France, who can do more, are reluctant to do so.”

For Mr. Speck, Germany and France are trying to manage two risks. First, that Russia wins, feels more emboldened and then moves on Moldova, Kazakhstan and perhaps even the Baltics. So there is a recognition that the West must help Ukraine, but within limits.

Because there is “an equal fear” of escalation, he said, if “Russia feels pushed against a wall, cornered and humiliated.” Washington shares that fear, but it is stronger in Paris and Berlin, because they are closer. “So it’s threat perception and a calculation about the scenarios they fear.”

Still, however difficult the domestic situation now, Western Europe is weaning itself from its dependency on Russian coal, oil and gas, and it will not go back, both for economic and security reasons.

So Mr. Putin’s efforts to wait out and divide NATO and the European Union will ultimately fail, said Nathalie Tocci, director of Italy’s International Affairs Institute. “The Russian invasion is so extreme and obscene it will keep consensus,” she said, “because we don’t have an alternative.”

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HEADLINE	07/14 Canada: random testing resumes at airports
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/canada/canada-covid-testing-travel-airports.html
GIST	<p>Mandatory coronavirus testing of randomly chosen international passengers arriving in Canada will resume at the country’s four major airports, government officials announced on Thursday.</p> <p>The move comes as Canadian airports are grappling with the same kind of problems afflicting air travel around the world, including staff shortages, cancellations, delays and frustrated passengers.</p> <p>Random testing will resume on July 19 for the passengers deplaning at airports in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and Toronto, the Public Health Agency of Canada said.</p> <p>Canada requires travelers arriving from abroad, including by air, to be fully vaccinated, which means they have gotten their initial set of shots at least 14 days prior, but it dropped the requirement last month for people traveling by air within Canada and for federal transport workers. Still, travelers who are not vaccinated because they are exempt or Canadian must test for the coronavirus for 10 days after flying in to Canada from an international airport, and travelers who test positive or have symptoms on arrival are required to isolate.</p> <p>“We need to keep border testing measures in place because that is how we track importation of the Covid-19 virus, and of new variants of concern,” the federal health minister, Jean-Yves Duclos, said in a news release announcing the policy.</p> <p>Canada temporarily paused the airport testing just over a month ago, a move the government said would allow it to shift testing sites to locations outside the airports to help streamline airport traffic. Similar testing at Canada’s land border with the United States has not been interrupted.</p> <p>“The temporary pause in mandatory random testing at airports was helpful, as it resulted in a smoother experience for arriving passengers,” Julie Bannerjea, a spokeswoman at the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, said in an email.</p>

Flight delays have been frequent: In June, between 10 and 27 percent of flights at the four airports were delayed by more than 15 minutes, according to data by OAG, a global travel analytics company.

More than 80 percent of Canadians are fully vaccinated, and close to half have received a booster dose as well, according to federal public health agency [data](#); almost 10 percent have received two boosters. But [the Omicron subvariant known as BA.5](#) is spreading rapidly in Canada, accounting for more than 40 percent of the country's new cases in June. The subvariant is especially adept at evading some antibodies from previous infections and vaccines, but experts say there is no evidence it causes more severe disease.

"With the constant mutation of this virus, and what it's doing in terms of transmission," several Canadian provinces are in the midst of another wave, Dr. Howard Njoo, Canada's deputy chief public health officer, said Thursday at a news conference.

He was joined by other senior public health officials [to announce that Health Canada had approved Moderna's Covid vaccine](#) for children aged six months through five years, the first vaccine it has authorized for most of that age group. The step makes about 1.7 million more children in the country eligible to be vaccinated. For months, the vaccine [from Pfizer-BioNTech has been available to children ages 5 through 11](#) as well as the vaccine [from Moderna for children 6 through 11](#).

Though nations across the globe have dropped a variety of public health safety measures over the last several months, the World Health Organization said earlier this week that the pandemic remains a [global public health emergency](#), saying "the virus is running freely and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden based on their capacity." W.H.O. regional officials for Africa [issued a warning on Thursday](#) to governments to increase enforcement of public health measures to curb the spread of the virus.

In Europe, where most Covid precautions were relaxed in the spring and the summer travel season is now in full swing, health officials say they are in the middle of a [summertime virus surge](#) driven by Omicron subvariants. The Mediterranean island nation of [Cyprus reinstated](#) its indoor mask mandates last week.

At least three cities in China have been put under [partial lockdowns](#) this week, as the government keeps trying to snuff out fresh coronavirus outbreaks. And in the United States, federal health officials urged Americans this week [to do more to protect themselves from Covid](#) because of [rising levels of BA.5](#). "We should not let it disrupt our lives, but we cannot deny that it is a reality that we need to deal with," said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, President Biden's chief medical adviser for the pandemic.

At the four Canadian airports, soon after completing their customs declaration, passengers who are selected for a mandatory test will be notified by email and told book an in-person appointment at an off-site clinic or pharmacy, or to take a self-administered test later and attend a virtual appointment.

Masks continue to be required aboard flights leaving Canada.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, air travel has been the focus of heightened concern for transmission of the virus.

"When we're traveling, especially, we don't have control over the ventilation," with the exception of the air nozzle above each seat, said Marianne Levitsky, an adjunct lecturer at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and a certified industrial hygienist.

Ms. Levitsky encourages passengers to use the nozzle to increase the flow of air in their space on a plane, and said that wearing a respirator mask with a strong filter during a flight is "even more important," especially when the plane is crowded.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/15/nyregion/monkeypox-nyc.html
GIST	<p>Over the past month, the number of people identified with monkeypox in New York City has jumped more than 30 fold, from 10 to 336, a figure that surely underestimates the incidence rate, considering that many cases have gone undiagnosed. During this period, Mayor Eric Adams was busy celebrating Pride, holding a party at Gracie mansion and reminding the world just how deeply New York embraces the L.G.B.T.Q. community, while so many other parts of the country seem bent on a regression to the pre-Stonewall era.</p> <p>“Here in New York,” the mayor declared, “we’re happy to say ‘we are gay.’”</p> <p>But “we” are not getting monkeypox, a disease primarily (and currently) afflicting men who have sex with men. The lack of public information about the illness, along with the difficulties around access to the vaccine, have shown how the professed love and support coming from the left can feel rhetorical.</p> <p>In the most liberal parts of the country we are, ostensibly, in the midst of a new wave of liberation and understanding around sexual and gender identity, one transforming the social order and expanding our cultural vantage. Films like “Fire Island,” to take a recent example, a romantic comedy set among a group of queer, ethnically diverse friends during one hedonistic week in the Pines, enjoy a mainstream popularity that would have eluded them even a decade ago. And yet, at the same time, here we are, decades after the AIDS crisis, unable or unwilling to effectively manage a virus that is disproportionately affecting gay men.</p> <p>Although monkeypox hasn’t killed anyone in the United States, it brings symptoms similar to smallpox — fever, chills, muscle aches, a violent rash carrying the potential to disrupt a patient’s life for weeks.</p> <p>Among gay men in New York, the epicenter of the outbreak nationwide, anxiety has been mounting. “There’s this pall over the community this summer,” Michael Donnelly, a public health activist, told me. “There’s a real sense of unfairness because we just went through this. So many of us tried to do the right thing.”</p> <p>The “this” of course, is Covid, which gay men have taken very seriously; from the earliest days of vaccination, Hell’s Kitchen, where many live, maintained one of the highest inoculation rates in the city.</p> <p>By trade, Mr. Donnelly is a data scientist who served as a consultant to the State of New York during the first year of the pandemic. Because of this, his friends have turned to him for help in figuring out what to do about monkeypox. One friend, he said, has been suffering for eight days and still hasn’t received his test results. “They are getting conflicting messages. Is this an S.T.I. or isn’t it?” Vaguely enough, the Centers for Disease Control explains that people with monkeypox “generally report having close, sustained physical contact” with others who have contracted the virus.</p> <p>“The system has been creakingly slow in responding to this crisis,” Mr. Donnelly continued. “There is antiviral treatment for this but people aren’t getting treatments because of regulatory hurdles. And beyond that you have other folks who’d settle for pain management, but I think doctors are just not aware of how excruciatingly painful this is — it is knives every time you go to the bathroom — and people are going home with prescriptions for Tylenol.”</p> <p>On Tuesday, the third time that the city’s health department offered registration for vaccine appointments, the scheduling site shut down quickly, prompting Erik Bottcher, a city councilman who represents Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea and who knows four people who contracted the virus over the past week, to write on Twitter: “Aaaand the website crashes immediately. Who could have predicted this? a: EVERYONE.”</p> <p>The first few occasions in which vaccine appointments became available in late June and again earlier this month were also beset by problems. On the morning of July 6, the city health department said on Twitter that a new round of appointments was on the way, but didn’t follow up again until the early</p>

afternoon, at which point officials announced that a “glitch” had resulted in the appointments already being taken.

Vaccine supply has been nowhere near enough to meet demand largely because [hundreds of thousands of doses have been sequestered in Denmark](#), a result of the F.D.A.’s refusal to release them on the grounds that it had not recently inspected the factory in which they were made, even though the European Union’s equivalent of the agency had done so.

“I think it’s embarrassing for us as a country that immediately following the Covid-19 pandemic we’re getting caught off guard by another pandemic and we’re unable to address it properly,” Mr. Bottcher told me.

Facing increasing pressure, Mr. Adams called on the Biden administration earlier this week to deliver more vaccines to the city beyond what has already been allocated, which includes 14,500 new doses that just arrived and that the city plans to distribute in every borough. But that figure represents roughly 10 percent of the national total, even though [the city has 32 percent](#) of the country’s cases. Issues around fair access are also concerning, given that the city’s reliance on Twitter to distribute information about vaccine availability has privileged those with the time to linger online.

Among those lucky enough to have received their shots, many were able to book appointments through advance word from a whisper network made up of well-connected men in tech, health care and the media, when a much wider demographic would have benefited from the use of a broad, public-information campaign.

With conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion front of mind in nearly every sector of contemporary life, was this really the way forward?

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HEADLINE	07/15 Hospitalizations climb; a nursing shortage
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/15/us/hospital-nursing-shortage.html
GIST	<p>American hospitals are once again filling up with coronavirus patients — but not with nurses to care for them. The nation’s chronic shortage of registered nurses is as bad in some parts of the country as it has ever been, experts say, and it is showing signs of getting worse.</p> <p>Hospitalizations have risen steadily in recent weeks, and the daily average number of people in hospitals who are infected with the coronavirus now exceeds 39,000, the highest it has been since the waning days of the first Omicron surge in early March. The rise is being driven largely by BA.5, a rapidly spreading Omicron subvariant that is the best yet at evading some antibodies from previous infections or vaccines.</p> <p>But in the face of the growing need, hospitals across the country say they still cannot find enough nurses.</p> <p>In New York State, the shortage is at an “all-time high,” said Matthew Allen, a registered nurse at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City and a board member of the New York State Nursing Association. “It’s just historic, more than it’s ever been before,” Mr. Allen said, noting that as of last week, Mount Sinai’s hospital network alone had 71 unfilled registered nurse and nurse practitioner positions.</p> <p>Nearly 14 percent of nursing jobs at acute-care hospitals in Massachusetts are unfilled, a shortfall that has doubled in size since 2019, according to a recent survey by the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association. The association found more than 5,000 unfilled nursing positions at hospitals in the state.</p> <p>To close the gaps, hospitals are offering financial incentives for new hires, bringing in more freelance nurses and in some cases cutting services that they cannot adequately staff to provide.</p> <p>Martin General Hospital, a 49-bed facility in eastern North Carolina, said this week that it would temporarily shut down its intensive care unit starting in August because of the difficulty of finding nurses.</p>

“The critical shortage levels are even more challenging in rural areas,” John Jacobson, the hospital’s chief executive, said in a statement.

At Johnson Memorial Hospital in Stafford Springs, Conn., inpatient and outpatient surgery has been halted since June 9. The hospital said on Wednesday that it would seek to discontinue inpatient surgical services permanently, and would shut down its labor and delivery unit, in part because of staffing shortages, according to Mary Orr, a hospital spokeswoman.

The shortage of nurses in Florida is “probably the worst” that hospitals have experienced in decades, said Mary Mayhew, chief executive of the Florida Hospital Association, which represents more than 200 hospitals and health systems in the state.

Part of the problem, Ms. Mayhew said, was the large number of nurses who were leaving regular hospital jobs to earn more money as temporary and contract nurses. “We have a turnover rate that is 25 to 30 percent, the highest we have ever seen in the decades we’ve been tracking that data,” she said.

The reliance of the association’s member hospitals on temporary nursing staff, once minimal, has soared more than fivefold since 2019, Ms. Mayhew said.

Broward Health, a health care system in Florida, is trying to fill 400 vacant nursing positions by offering bonuses of up to \$20,000 and other incentives, a hospital spokesperson said.

Demand for nurses is projected to keep growing significantly in the United States. The McKinsey consulting firm [projected in a report in May](#) that the nation could face a shortage of up to 450,000 nurses by 2025.

[Demand for travel nurses](#), who are brought in from out of town by staffing agencies to fill gaps at hospitals for a few weeks or months, climbed to a record high in 2021, and after receding somewhat earlier this year, has been rising steadily again since May, according to said April Hansen, group president at Aya Healthcare, one of the nation’s major providers of travel nurses.

“It’s been like a roller coaster,” Ms. Hansen said. “We are at a point in time now where demand is more than double the steady-state demand that existed in prepandemic times.”

She said wages for travel nurses were 20 percent higher now than before the pandemic took hold, and at one point had spiked to about double the prepandemic average.

While Aya Healthcare declined to be specific about the wages, another staffing company, Vivian Health, said in a June report that the national average for travel nurse pay was \$3,004 a week, a 23 percent increase from the previous year’s average of \$2,450.

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HEADLINE	07/14 WHO warns Africa against Covid apathy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/africa/who-covid-africa.html
GIST	<p>With coronavirus case counts climbing and vaccination efforts lagging in some African nations, regional officials of the World Health Organization issued a warning on Thursday against lax enforcement of public health measures to curb the pandemic on the continent.</p> <p>Precautions like mask-wearing, hand-washing and social distancing have declined drastically in many countries as people become inured to the pandemic and government officials push for a return to normal life, Dr. Pamela Mitula, an epidemiologist and vaccine specialist with the W.H.O.’s regional office for Africa, said at a news conference. And many countries have eased Covid-19 policies in recent months, including fully reopening schools and universities, dropping mask mandates, permitting large election rallies and suspending test requirements for travelers arriving from abroad.</p>

“On this apathy, what we would say is that countries should really be encouraged and reminded that the pandemic is far from over,” Dr. Mitula said. “They need to be vigilant.”

The warning came two days after the W.H.O., a United Nations agency, declared that Covid-19 [was still a global public health emergency](#) that was not going anywhere.

Africa has reported more than 12 million virus cases and 255,442 deaths from Covid-19 so far, according to the W.H.O., and both figures almost certainly understate the pandemic’s true toll.

The highly transmissible Omicron subvariants of the virus are driving a wave of infections across the continent, especially in North Africa, where new cases rose by 17 percent last week, according to Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the W.H.O. Africa regional director.

Dr. Moeti said she expected the upward trend in North Africa — concentrated so far in Morocco and Tunisia — to start to recede in the next few weeks, as happened recently in southern African nations like Namibia and Botswana, because of improved detection and response mechanisms.

But the potential for more virus surges, she said, should push countries to vaccinate more of their populations, particularly older residents, medical workers and those with underlying health conditions. As of July 10, just 21.1 percent of Africa’s 1.2 billion population was fully vaccinated, according to the W.H.O.

“This phase of the pandemic may well be characterized by relatively low incidence and much lower risk for hospitalization and death,” Dr. Moeti said, “but the Omicron variant remains highly transmissible.”

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HEADLINE	07/14 US closes gap on hypersonic missile race
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/14/recent-tests-us-close-gap-hypersonics-china-russia/
GIST	<p>The decades-long “space race” between the U.S. and the Soviet Union effectively ended in July 1969 when NASA astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped off his spacecraft and left a footprint on the surface of the moon.</p> <p>Now the U.S., Russia and China are in another space race: to develop a generation of “hypersonic” weapons capable of flying more than five times the speed of sound and frustrating even the most sophisticated modern missile defense systems. Until recently, Washington appeared to be behind Moscow and Beijing.</p> <p>The U.S. Air Force confirmed that it had completed a second successful test of its Air-Launched Rapid Response Weapon (ARRW) booster on Tuesday off the California coast. The hypersonic weapon in this system is carried aloft under the wing of an aircraft before it is launched toward a target. In previous tests, the hypersonic missile failed to detach.</p> <p>In late May, the Pentagon’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) successfully tested a ground-launched hypersonic weapon at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. Lockheed Martin developed both missiles.</p> <p>The successes will likely ease some worried minds at the Pentagon while “near-peer” adversaries have claimed marked advances in their hypersonic programs.</p> <p>In August last year, China launched a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile that circled the globe through low-orbit space before speeding toward its target on the ground. The flight reportedly caught U.S. intelligence agencies by surprise. Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, compared it to a “Sputnik moment.”</p>

The test also was a wake-up call for some on Capitol Hill.

“The People’s Liberation Army now has an increasingly credible capability to undermine our missile defenses and threaten the American homeland with both conventional and nuclear strikes,” Rep. Mike Gallagher, Wisconsin Republican, said after the Chinese test firing. “Even more disturbing is the fact that American technology has contributed to the PLA’s hypersonic missile program.”

The three nations are developing hypersonic weapons that fly at five times the speed of sound. Unlike ballistic missiles, which follow a fixed and predictable arc, hypersonic weapons are maneuverable, making them harder to track and shoot down with current air and missile defense technology.

The U.S. hypersonic program has been plagued with problems. In June, a weapon failed during a full system test at the Pacific Missile Range Facility in Hawaii. The mission was supposed to launch the hypersonic missile package atop a two-stage missile booster. The booster is designed to accelerate to hypersonic speeds and then send the detached glide body to the target.

In December 2019, the Russian Defense Ministry claimed it had fielded the first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) payload, said Air Force Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, head of U.S. Northern Command. President Vladimir Putin hailed the breakthrough as a technology that only Russia had.

“These weapons are designed to glide at extremely high speeds and maneuver at low altitudes in order to complicate our ability to detect and track,” Gen. VanHerck said in March during testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The U.S. has had some success in the hypersonic weapons race. On May 14, an Air Force B-52 bomber released an AGM-183A Air-launched Rapid Response Weapon off the coast of Southern California. The booster ignited and burned for what the Air Force said was the “expected duration” and achieved hypersonic speeds.

The Air Force conducted a second successful ARRW launch on June 12. It again reached hypersonic speeds, and Air Force officials said the test met their objectives.

“The test successfully demonstrated booster performance, expanding the operational envelope,” Air Force Brig. Gen. Heath Collins, the program director, said in a statement.

The Pentagon’s DARPA said it successfully launched its first flight test of a ground-launched hypersonic missile system at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

Rather than rely on a custom-made launcher, DARPA’s Operational Fires program uses a standard military logistics truck to launch the high-speed, medium-range missile. The program also used a standard Army artillery fire control system to initiate the test mission. Although Lockheed Martin built that system, DARPA officials said it uses a Northrup Grumman rocket motor.

“This is a promising step toward a TEL on-demand capability for accurately firing medium-range missiles from highly agile, readily available logistics trucks that are already in both U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps inventory,” Air Force Lt. Col. Joshua Stults, DARPA’s program manager, called the test a “promising step” and noted that the Army and Marine Corps have trucks in their inventory that can launch the hypersonic weaponry.

DARPA researchers say their primary goal is to develop a ground-launched, two-stage hypersonic system that can penetrate air defenses and strike critical targets in a timely manner.

Russia also is moving forward with its hypersonic program. According to the government-controlled Tass news agency, Moscow is developing a hypersonic missile known as the Zmeevik that would allow its navy to take on the enemy’s largest warships.

	<p>“The Zmeevik ballistic missile with hypersonic combat equipment has been in development for quite a long time. It will be designed to destroy large surface targets, primarily aircraft carriers,” Tass reported, citing a source “close to the military department and the military-industrial complex.”</p> <p>Tass said a Zmeevik missile has a range of about 2,500 miles and could enter service with the coastal missile units of Russia’s navy. In June, the Russian navy tested another hypersonic missile known as the Tsirkon.</p> <p>U.S. officials said the hypersonic missile program offers a necessary long-range strike option for military leaders against distant or well-defended threats. But in a July 2021 report, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) cited critics who said it contributes little to U.S. military capability and is unnecessary for deterrence.</p> <p>In contrast to those in Russia and China, most U.S. hypersonic weapons are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead. As a result, they will likely require greater accuracy and be more technologically challenging to develop, CRS officials said.</p> <p>Congress should seek answers to several questions before it continues pumping money into the hypersonic missile program, CRS researchers said. Lawmakers need to be told what mission a hypersonic missile would be used for and whether it would be the most cost-effective means.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/15 Canada: Russia responsible war crimes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/15/g20-canada-says-russian-delegation-is-personally-responsible-for-war-crimes-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Canada’s finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, has told Russian officials at a meeting of G20 finance ministers that she held them personally responsible for “war crimes” committed during Russia’s war in Ukraine, a western official said.</p> <p>Freeland directly addressed the Russian delegation taking part in the meeting of the Group of 20 major economies, telling them on Friday: “It is not only generals who commit war crimes, it is the economic technocrats who allow the war to happen and to continue,” the official said.</p> <p>Freeland, whose maternal grandparents were born in Ukraine, told the opening G20 session that the war was the “single biggest threat to the global economy right now”, the official said.</p> <p>A day before the meeting, the US Treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, set the tone, calling Russia’s war in Ukraine the “greatest challenge” to the global economy and saying members of Putin’s government “have no place” at the talks.</p> <p>“We are seeing negative spillover effects from that war in every corner of the world, particularly with respect to higher energy prices and rising food insecurity,” she said.</p> <p>Yellen was expected to press G20 allies for a price cap on Russian oil to choke off President Vladimir Putin’s war chest and pressure Moscow to end its invasion while bringing down energy costs.</p> <p>The two-day meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank chiefs from top economies started on the resort island of Bali under the shadow of a war that has roiled markets, spiked food prices and stoked breakneck inflation, a week after Moscow’s top diplomat walked out of talks with the forum’s foreign ministers.</p> <p>The talks’ host warned delegates that failure to tackle energy and food crises would be catastrophic.</p>

In her opening remarks, the Indonesian finance minister, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, called on ministers to work together with a spirit of “cooperation, collaboration and consensus” because “the world is watching” for solutions.

“The cost of our failure is more than we can afford,” she told delegates. “The humanitarian consequences for the world and for many low-income countries would be catastrophic.”

Top global finance figures are to discuss the rebound from the coronavirus pandemic, but the impact of the Ukraine war – weighing on an already brittle global recovery – will top the agenda.

Both the Russian finance minister, Anton Siluanov, and the Ukrainian finance minister, Serhiy Marchenko, are participating virtually in the meeting.

Yellen in April led a multinational walkout of finance officials as Russian delegates spoke at a G20 meeting in Washington. No communique was issued at the end of that meeting.

It is unclear if a similar walkout will take place at this meeting.

There is also unlikely to be a final communique issued when talks end on Saturday because of disagreements with Russia.

The G20 chair, Indonesia – which pursues a neutral foreign policy – has refrained from uninviting Russia despite Western pressure.

Italy and Canada’s finance ministers are in attendance, but the Chinese finance minister, Liu Kun, and Britain’s new finance minister, Nadhim Zahawi, are only attending virtually.

The International Monetary Fund chief, Kristalina Georgieva, will appear in person after saying on Wednesday the global economic outlook had “darkened significantly” because of Moscow’s invasion.

The meeting is a prelude to the leaders’ summit on the Indonesian island in November that was meant to focus on the global recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other issues to be tackled by the ministers include digital financial inclusion – with more than a billion of the world’s population still without access to a bank account – and the deadline for an international overhaul of tax rules.

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HEADLINE	07/14 King Co. to reinstate mask mandates?
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-health-officials-having-active-discussions-on-whether-to-reinstate-mask-mandates
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - COVID-19 levels remain high this summer in Washington’s most populous county — which includes Seattle.</p> <p>Increasingly involving the highly transmissible omicron BA.5 variant and BA.4, cases are higher than the peak of last year’s delta wave, according to Dr. Jeff Duchin, health officer for Public Health – Seattle & King County.</p> <p>And those case numbers are an undercount because many people are using rapid at-home tests, which are rarely included in official numbers, Duchin said during a press briefing on Thursday.</p> <p>Duchin said Thursday that hospitalizations in King County have increased three-fold since April. Duchin said as a result there are active discussions about mandates.</p>

"We are actively considering if, and when, additional mandates may be needed. And I'm really encouraging everyone now, to please, let's make sure we've done all we can on a voluntary basis before we have to go there," Duchin said during a press briefing.

He said mandates have their place when short-term immediate improvement is needed.

In Los Angeles County, county health Director Barbara Ferrer said Thursday that residents face a return to a broad indoor mask mandate on July 29 if current trends in hospital admissions continue.

"But over the long-term we really do need people to understand that we need both our business community, our leadership in the community, and our community members to take the steps that they need to take to protect themselves and one another," Duchin said.

Staying current with vaccinations and boosters, improving indoor air quality and ventilation, and wearing high-quality masks can help reduce risks.

Duchin said with the potential for lasting symptoms, [known as long COVID](#), it's worth preventing even mild infections.

More than 86% of people five and older have completed their initial vaccine series in King County. However, just over half have gotten a booster.

Earlier this week the White House response team urgently called on everyone 50 and older to get a booster if they haven't yet in 2022.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Food banks: seniors hardest hit by inflation
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/food-pantries-are-trying-to-help-a-growing-number-of-seniors-and-others-hit-by-inflation
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Newly-released numbers show that inflation has skyrocketed nationwide since this same time last year. The Consumer Price Index went up more than 9% from a year ago in June and in Washington state, the numbers are even higher.</p> <p>At the Rainier Valley Food Bank, volunteers are working to keep the community healthy and fed by delivering groceries and offering in-person "shopping" during which people can select their own items for free.</p> <p>"It gives them a chance to make their monthly salary go a little further," said Gloria Hatcher-Mays, Executive Director, Rainier Valley Food Bank.</p> <p>Organizers and volunteers have watched prices skyrocket at the grocery store along with their clients, especially locally where inflation has outpaced the national level.</p> <p>"For the nation, it was roughly 9.1 % for an inflation increase in the month of June, but what we know in Seattle it's gone up another percentage point to 10.1%, so we've been much more impacted here than in other places," said Hatcher-Mays.</p> <p>In terms of demographics, one of the larger groups the Rainier Valley Food Bank serves is seniors, and they are hit the hardest with the rising cost of food.</p> <p>"We have seen more seniors finding their way to the food bank directly themselves," said Hatcher-Mays.</p> <p>She says social security checks are not keeping up.</p>

	<p>"We have seen social security checks not really having an increase, that correlates what happens with inflation, so seniors are really feeling the pinch," said Hatcher-Mays.</p> <p>Christina Wong, Director of Public Policy at Northwest Harvest says workers there recently completed a survey of families from across Washington. She says 90% reported that the cost of living was their biggest barrier to getting nutritious food. She says Congress has the opportunity right now during the budget reconciliation process to bring back some of the resources that were lost, including the expanded Child Tax Credit.</p> <p>"It was no surprise that while those payments were going out last year, child hunger dropped by 40%, and then they went back up again to 40%," said Wong.</p> <p>She says there has also been a drop-off in donations to food pantries because people are feeling more challenged in their own homes. Hatcher-Mays says they've also felt the pinch at the Rainier Valley Food Bank.</p> <p>"From January to June, we have seen an increase of 15% in the amount of money that we have had to spend to buy the foodstuffs that we need to serve everyone here out of the food bank," said Hatcher-Mays.</p> <p>Wong says gas prices are another hurdle for local families. They used to be able to drive to different stores to comparison shop to get the best deal on food, but with gas prices so high, it's not cost-effective to do that.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 China's economic growth slows sharply
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/business/china-economy-slows.html
GIST	<p>The Chinese economy grew this spring at its slowest rate since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, a sharp slowdown from a Covid-19 policy that continues to prompt widespread lockdowns and mass quarantines, bringing some business activity to a halt.</p> <p>The National Bureau of Statistics said on Friday that the economy expanded 0.4 percent from a year earlier in the second quarter, the lowest rate of growth since the first three months of 2020. That was when the country effectively shut down to fight the early stages of the pandemic, its economy shrinking for the first time in 28 years.</p> <p>The 2020 downturn was short-lived, with the Chinese economy recovering almost immediately. But the current outlook is not so promising. Unemployment is close to the highest levels on record. The housing market is still a mess, and small businesses are bearing the brunt of weakness in consumer spending.</p> <p>The slowing economy poses a political problem for China, which is trying to project unwavering strength and stability in a year when it is scheduled to hold its Communist Party congress. Xi Jinping, the country's leader, is expected to coast to another five-year term.</p> <p>A thriving economy and the promise of growing wealth have underpinned China's ascent, part of the bargain that Chinese citizens accept in exchange for living under authoritarian rule. But the lockdowns, a staple of Beijing's zero-Covid policy, have heightened the risk of instability — socially and economically.</p> <p>"China is the shoe that has never dropped in the global economy," said Kenneth Rogoff, a professor of economics at Harvard University and a former chief economist for the International Monetary Fund. "China is no position to be the global engine of growth right now, and the long-term fundamentals point to much slower growth in the next decade."</p> <p>In May, Li Keqiang, China's premier, called an emergency meeting and sounded the alarm about the need to gin up economic growth to more than 100,000 officials from businesses and local governments. The stark warning cast doubt about China's ability to reach its earlier growth target of 5.5 percent for the year.</p>

Measures to crack down on excessive borrowing by property developers have combined with the Covid restrictions to exacerbate a slowdown that could have global implications. Last month, Nike said [revenue and profit fell](#) in its most recent fiscal quarter, with sales to China falling 19 percent.

The [most recent economic malaise](#) hit in April and May, when Shanghai, China's largest city, went into lockdown for nearly two months and the impact rippled through the economy. Office buildings were closed, and workers were ordered to remain at home. Throughout China, hundreds of millions of consumers were shut in — leaving stores, restaurants and service providers to carry on without customers.

Zheng Jingrong, an owner of a shop in Beijing selling imported handmade clothes, said she had typically sold 150 to 200 pieces of clothing in a month before the pandemic. In May, she sold 20. Her regular customers don't come by anymore, she said, and people are generally reluctant to go out. Each year of the pandemic has been "worse than the year before," Ms. Zheng said.

And the problem is not limited to her clothing shop. Ms. Zheng said more than 300 stores used to operate in the same neighborhood as her shop in Gulou, a maze of streets and alleyways once teeming with food stalls, cafes and bars. She estimated that 20 percent of those businesses were closing or had closed.

"Because China started booming and developing from the 1980s, its economy had always been going up," said Ms. Zheng, who has run the shop for 15 years. "Now it's obviously going down."

Retail sales, an indicator of how much consumers are spending, fell 4.6 percent from a year earlier in April through June, according to the government.

And even as the economy improved in June, the threat of further mass quarantines may derail that nascent recovery. This week, the cities of Xi'an, Lanzhou and Haikou imposed partial lockdowns, setting restrictions on several million residents by closing nonessential businesses and enforcing mass testing.

The Japanese securities firm Nomura estimated that, as of Monday, 247 million people in 31 cities were under some kind of lockdown in China, covering about one-fifth of the national population and accounting for the equivalent of around \$4.3 trillion in annual gross domestic product. The number of affected cities nearly tripled from a week earlier.

Beijing has urged local authorities to step up measures to ensure job stability during lockdowns. And yet, with so many small and medium-size businesses suffering financially, the government has struggled to get a handle on rising unemployment.

As of June, unemployment stood at 5.5 percent — an improvement from April and May but close to the highest level since China started reporting the figures in 2018. For job seekers ages 16 to 24, who include new college graduates, the unemployment rate was more than three times as high at 19.3 percent.

James Fu resigned from his job last month as a landscape designer for a property developer — a grueling job that he grew to hate. But now he's dealing with the anxiety of finding a job in a tough labor market, especially in real estate.

Mr. Fu, 28, said fewer jobs were available at property companies because firms were either struggling financially or using the downturn to justify cutting staff and costs. And because the pool of jobs has shrunk, he said, the requirements to secure one have gone up. He said a job that he might have gotten in the past with two to three years of experience now required five to 10 years, at the same salary.

"I've been at a standstill recently," said Mr. Fu, who lives in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. "This year may be particularly difficult. I think it has been more difficult since the pandemic began."

Along with the high unemployment, there are emerging signs that the weakness in the property market could also pose a major problem for China's government this year. Measures to limit property speculation

	<p>pushed the sector into a debt spiral, depressing the prices of new homes for the first time in years and rattling the confidence of consumers, many of whom had plowed household savings into real estate.</p> <p>Dissatisfaction among people who bought homes before they were built is growing. According to state media, more home buyers are refusing to pay mortgages, upset about delays in construction as well as declines in home prices.</p> <p>Buyers of 35 projects across 22 cities have decided to stop paying mortgages, a Citigroup analyst, Griffin Chan, wrote in a note to clients on Wednesday. That has put property firms in a bind: If they walk away with the customers' down payments for not paying their mortgages, "social instability" could result, Mr. Chan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 China surveillance state faces resistance
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/business/china-data-privacy.html
GIST	<p>Chinese artists have staged performances to highlight the ubiquity of surveillance cameras. Privacy activists have filed lawsuits against the collection of facial recognition data. Ordinary citizens and establishment intellectuals alike have pushed back against the abuse of Covid tracking apps by the authorities to curb protests. Internet users have shared tips on how to evade digital monitoring.</p> <p>As China builds up its vast surveillance and security apparatus, it is running up against growing public unease about the lack of safeguards to prevent the theft or misuse of personal data. The ruling Communist Party is keenly aware of the cost to its credibility of any major security lapses: Last week, it moved systematically to squelch news about what was probably the largest known breach of a Chinese government computer system, involving the personal information of as many as one billion citizens.</p> <p>The breach dealt a blow to Beijing, exposing the risks of its expansive efforts to vacuum up enormous amounts of digital and biological information on the daily activities and social connections of its people from social media posts, biometric data, phone records and surveillance videos. The government says these efforts are necessary for public safety: to limit the spread of Covid, for instance, or to catch criminals. But its failure to protect the data exposes citizens to problems like fraud and extortion, and threatens to erode people's willingness to comply with surveillance.</p> <p>"You never know who is going to sell or leak your information," said Jewel Liao, a Shanghai resident whose details were among those released in the leak.</p> <p>"It's just a bit unusual to see that even the police are vulnerable, too," Ms. Liao said.</p> <p>China, which has been racing to create of the world's toughest data privacy regimes, frequently excoriates companies for mishandling data. But the authorities rarely point fingers at the country's other top collector of personal information: the government itself.</p> <p>Security researchers say the leaked database, apparently used by the police in Shanghai, had been left online and unsecured for months. It was exposed after an anonymous user posted in an online forum offering to sell the vast trove of data for 10 Bitcoin, or about \$200,000. The New York Times confirmed parts of a sample of the database released by the anonymous user, who posted under the name ChinaDan.</p> <p>In addition to basic information like names, addresses and ID numbers, the sample featured details that appeared to be drawn from external databases, like instructions for couriers on where to drop off deliveries, raising questions about how much information private companies share with the authorities. Of particular concern for many, it also contained intensely personal information, such as police reports that included the names of people accused of rape and domestic violence, as well as private information about political dissidents.</p>

The government has sought to erase nearly all discussion of the leak. At a cabinet meeting led by China's premier, Li Keqiang, last week, officials made only a passing reference to the question of privacy, emphasizing the need to "defend information security" so that the public and businesses could "operate with peace of mind," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Last year, the Chinese authorities passed two new laws on data security and privacy, modeled after the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation. The laws were aimed mostly at addressing the collection of private data by companies — and the widespread internet fraud and personal information theft that has emerged as a result.

The government's efforts to institute safeguards, however, have lagged its own push to collect information. In recent years, The Times has reviewed other [leaked databases](#) used by the police in China that were left online with little to no protection; some contained facial recognition records and ID scans of people in a Muslim ethnic minority region.

Now, there are signs that people are growing wary of the government and public institutions, too, as they see how their own data is being used against them. Last month, a nationwide outcry erupted over the apparent abuse of Covid-19 tracking technology by local authorities.

Protesters [fighting to recover their savings](#) from four rural banks in the central Chinese city of Zhengzhou found that the [mobile apps used to identify and isolate people](#) who might be spreading Covid had turned from green — meaning safe — to red, a designation that would prevent them from moving freely.

"There is no privacy in China," said Silvia Si, 30, a protester whose health code had turned red. The authorities in Zhengzhou, under pressure to account for the episode, later punished five officials for changing the codes of more than 1,300 customers.

Even when the Covid-19 tracking technologies are used for their stated purpose, more people seem willing to ask if the surveillance is excessive. On Wednesday, a blogger in Beijing [posted on Weibo](#) that he was refusing to wear an electronic bracelet to track his movements while in isolation, saying the device was an "electronic shackle" and an infringement on his privacy. The post was liked around 60,000 times, and users flooded it with responses. Many said the bracelet reminded them of the treatment of criminals; others called it a ploy to surreptitiously collect personal information. The post was later taken down by censors, the blogger said.

In recent years, individuals have sought to draw attention to privacy concerns. In 2019, a law professor in Hangzhou, a prominent tech hub in eastern China, sued a local zoo for forcing him to submit facial recognition data to enter, the first such lawsuit in China. He won the case.

Starting in late 2020, several Chinese cities began banning neighborhood committees from forcing residents to undergo biometric monitoring to enter their compounds. Around the same time, toilet paper dispensers using facial recognition were removed from public bathrooms in the southern Chinese city of Dongguan after public outrage.

In online forums like Zhihu, a Quora-like platform, Chinese users trade advice on how to evade surveillance (tips include wearing hats and masks, and pointing flashlights at security cameras). Over 60 percent of Chinese people say facial recognition technology has been abused, according to a study of more than 20,000 Chinese jointly conducted in late 2020 by a Chinese think tank and a government task force. More than 80 percent expressed concern about whether and how facial recognition data would be stored.

"The rise of the public's awareness of data privacy is an inevitable trend," said Dragon Zheng, an artist in the southern province of Guangxi whose practice explores the interaction of technology and governance.

In 2016, Mr. Zheng installed security cameras inside a large exhibition hall, which streamed live footage to a monitoring room set up in the center of the hall. Visitors were invited to enter the room, where they could manipulate the cameras and experience what Mr. Zheng called the feeling of “monitoring and being monitored, controlling and being controlled.”

Still, he emphasized that the risks and advantages of technology were not unique to China.

“Technology is like Pandora’s box,” Mr. Zheng said. “Once it’s open, how it is used depends on whose hands it falls into.”

Few Chinese citizens have publicly questioned the government about its collection of personal data. Part of that could be a result of the government’s thorough censorship and the threats to personal safety of criticizing the government. But many residents also see the handover of data as a necessary trade-off for security and convenience.

“There’s always been this split identity when it comes to privacy awareness in China,” said Samm Sacks, a researcher on technology policy at Yale Law School and New America. “People are far more trusting overall in how government entities handle their personal information and far more suspicious about the corporate sector.”

Legal analysts said any disciplinary actions resulting from the Shanghai police database breach were unlikely to be publicized. There are few mechanisms in place to hold Chinese government agencies responsible for their own data leaks. For many citizens, that lack of recourse has contributed to a sense of resignation.

Occasionally, though, they notch small victories, as Xu Peilin did when she took on her neighborhood committee last year. She had returned to her apartment building in Beijing one day to find that the compound wanted residents to submit to a facial recognition scanner to enter.

“It was insane,” said Ms. Xu, 37, a project manager at a start-up company. She said it reminded her of one of her favorite television shows, the British science fiction series “Black Mirror.”

Ms. Xu badgered her neighborhood committee by telephone and text message until it relented. For now, Ms. Xu said, she can still enter her compound using her key card, though she believed it was only a matter of time until the facial recognition devices became mandatory again.

“All I can do for now,” she said, “is continue to resist on a small scale.”

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HEADLINE	07/15 US: Saudi Arabia direct flights from Israel
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/15/world/biden-israel-saudi-arabia-news#saudi-arabia-will-allow-direct-flights-from-israel-biden-says
GIST	<p>Saudi Arabia has taken a small step toward normalizing relations with Israel by agreeing to allow Israeli planes to fly between the two countries, President Biden said on Friday — a new example of the growing ties between Israel and the Arab world after decades of diplomatic isolation.</p> <p>The announcement, made hours before Mr. Biden was scheduled to fly from Israel to Saudi Arabia, comes as Israel is gaining acceptance among some Arab leaders as their shared fears of a nuclear Iran supersede Arab solidarity with the Palestinians.</p> <p>The move fell a long way short of the diplomatic agreements sealed in 2020 between Israel, Bahrain, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates, and brokered by the Trump administration. Those pacts established full diplomatic relations between Israel and the three Arab countries and have since paved the way for direct trade and military partnerships.</p>

Mr. Biden hailed the flight deal with Saudi Arabia as a breakthrough. “Saudi Arabia’s decision can help build momentum toward Israel’s further integration into the region, including with Saudi Arabia,” he said in a statement.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid of Israel thanked the Saudi government but said the move was “only the first step” toward full ties. “We will continue working with necessary caution, for the sake of Israel’s economy, security and the good of our citizens,” Mr. Lapid added in a statement.

Merav Michaeli, Israel’s transportation minister, described the move as an important step toward “better and stronger relations with the countries of the Middle East, relations which will bring critical benefits to our security and to our economy.”

Though Saudi Arabia and Israel have long had clandestine relations, the Saudi government had previously said it would avoid a formal relationship with Israel until there was a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But leading Saudi royals have become [more critical](#) of the Palestinian leadership, and some Saudi commentators have recently expressed support for normalization with Israel.

Israeli officials hope the flights decision will enable members of Israel’s Muslim minority to fly directly to Saudi Arabia for [pilgrimages to Mecca](#). Last week, Esawi Frej, a rare Muslim minister in the Israeli cabinet, said he had asked Saudi Arabia to allow such a measure. “I want to see the day when I can depart from Ben-Gurion to Jeddah to fulfill my religious obligation,” Mr. Frej told an Israeli radio station, referring to Israel’s main airport and the one closest to Mecca.

The Israeli news media and officials have also suggested that the decision might come with an agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia to change the peacekeeping arrangements on a pair of small Saudi islands south of Israel in the Red Sea.

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HEADLINE	07/14 US, Israel differ on Iran nuclear program
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/middleeast/biden-israel-iran-nuclear.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — President Biden on Thursday issued one of the bluntest warnings to Tehran of his presidency, committing to Israel’s leaders that “we will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon,” but Israel’s caretaker prime minister, Yair Lapid, pushed even further, asking all democratic nations to vow to act if the Iranians continue “to develop their nuclear program.”</p> <p>The distinction between Mr. Biden’s vow to stop a “weapon” and Mr. Lapid’s insistence on destroying Iran’s entire “program” was more than semantic: It goes to the heart of their countries’ differing approaches in dealing with Iran’s nuclear ambitions.</p> <p>Even amid frequent and public affirmations of the close relationship between Israel and the United States, the differences over how to handle Iran remain stubborn. Several times on Thursday, members of Israel’s leadership publicly and privately urged that the United States develop a more credible military option to take out Iran’s nuclear facilities, as a way of convincing Tehran it must halt a rapidly accelerating program.</p> <p>Israel has conducted a series of covert sabotage and assassination operations to slow Iran’s ability to enrich nuclear fuel, while Mr. Biden has insisted that diplomacy, and a restoration of the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, are the best ways to find a permanent solution.</p> <p>“If they continue to develop their nuclear program, the free world will use force,” Mr. Lapid said at the opening of a news conference in Jerusalem after the two leaders met as part of Mr. Biden’s four-day visit to the Middle East.</p>

During those remarks, Mr. Biden listened attentively but never repeated that commitment. Instead, he stuck to talking about blocking Iran from obtaining a weapon — not a “program” that might be intended to develop one.

But even these long-running differences of strategy are shifting, amid cracks in Israel’s own consensus about how imminent and urgent a threat is posed by the Iranian nuclear program.

And on Thursday, those differences on Iran strategy were largely set aside on the first full day of Mr. Biden’s first trip to the Middle East as president, in a region where alliances and relationships have changed radically since he was last here as Barack Obama’s vice president.

On Friday he moves to the trip’s harder task: trying to revive the alliance with Saudi Arabia, amid sharp criticism, especially from the progressive wing of his own party, that he is rehabilitating a crown prince whom the C.I.A. believes was [knowledgeable of, and perhaps complicit in](#), the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, an American-based dissident and columnist.

Mr. Biden’s mission in Jerusalem was to bolster and deepen the relationship with Israeli leaders while stepping around a roiling election for a new prime minister.

And Mr. Biden used Thursday’s news conference with Mr. Lapid to bolster [the blossoming relationship between Israel and a handful of Arab states](#), including the creation of [a joint air defense zone to protect against Iranian drones and missiles](#). Administration officials say that while they are pushing for full diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, they expect only incremental progress toward that goal on this trip.

But it is Mr. Biden’s own relationship with Saudi Arabia that looms largest over the second part of his visit. In the short news conference on Thursday, Mr. Biden was pressed directly on whether he would raise the case of the killing of Mr. Khashoggi when he meets with Saudi leaders on Friday. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is accused of directly approving the brutal 2018 killing in Istanbul of Mr. Khashoggi, a columnist for The Washington Post who was living in the United States.

Mr. Biden said on Thursday that his views on the killing [were well-known](#), but he stopped short of saying whether he would specifically raise the dissident’s name during his meeting with Prince Mohammed.

“My views on Khashoggi have been absolutely, positively clear,” Mr. Biden said, adding that he had never hesitated to speak openly to allies and adversaries about human rights. But with the American leader scheduled to fly directly from Israel to Jeddah on Friday — a flight that itself says much about the changed environment in the Middle East — administration officials were still debating how, if at all, he should raise the case in public comments on Saudi soil.

In other cases, recently including Cuba and Venezuela, Mr. Biden has stressed that his administration is making democracy and respect for human rights the paramount consideration for dealing with other nations’ leaders. But on Thursday in Jerusalem, he said “the reason I am going to Saudi Arabia is to promote U.S. interests.” Those include getting the kingdom to pump more oil from its somewhat modest spare capacity.

Mr. Biden was clearly in his element all day in Jerusalem. These were the kinds of trips he loved as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and later as vice president.

Mr. Biden celebrated the signing of a new “Jerusalem Declaration,” a restatement of the solidity of the alliance between the two countries, of American commitments not to permit Iran to obtain a weapon, and of Israel’s rapprochement with many of the Arab adversaries that had tried to undercut the creation of a Jewish state.

While little in the declaration was new, the fact that it stated so boldly the broad outlines of the relationship — signed by a Democratic president who many in Israel viewed with suspicion, and by an

acting Israeli prime minister seeking to make his role permanent — dominated much of the public discussion in Israel.

On Thursday Mr. Biden was awarded the Israeli Presidential Medal of Honor, and, borrowing from the Torah, he called Israel “a nation that will never dwell alone, because as long as there’s the United States you will never be alone.”

Presiding over the medal ceremony, Isaac Herzog, Israel’s president, whose policymaking role is limited, said government officials had found a record of Mr. Biden’s first trip to Israel as a young senator in 1973. During that visit, Mr. Herzog read, Mr. Biden “was carried away by his enthusiasm,” a description that seemed no less apt nearly a half-century later.

Later on Thursday, Mr. Biden attended the opening of the Maccabiah Games, a quadrennial international Jewish sporting competition.

Mr. Biden spent much of his trip touting common projects between Israel and the United States, starting with the Iron Dome rocket-interception system and a new system named Iron Beam, still a prototype, that uses lasers. Mr. Biden watched a demonstration as soon as he landed in Israel, setting the tone for the rest of his trip.

“These technologies and advances are critical,” Mr. Biden said. “Every rocket that is intercepted is a potential life, maybe more, that is saved.”

His commitment to stopping Iran from actually acquiring a nuclear weapon was not new — George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump had all made similar vows — but his tougher-sounding language was unusually explicit, including the promise to use military force if necessary. (Mr. Obama, for example, would avoid outright threats and talk instead about employing “all instruments” of American power — financial, diplomatic and military.)

Israel has pursued a policy for several years now of repeatedly blowing up facilities and assassinating leaders of the nuclear program in an effort to slow Iran’s ability to produce nuclear fuel. That covert program has sped up in the past year, and Israeli officials sometimes have called it “mowing the lawn,” a recognition that as fast as they blow up elements of the program, the Iranians try to rebuild.

The United States is pursuing a different track, trying to revive the diplomatic accord with Iran, now seven years old, that Mr. Trump abandoned. That deal required Iran to ship 97 percent of its nuclear fuel out of the country, and many Israeli military and intelligence officials say they now think Mr. Trump’s move to abandon the agreement failed, allowing Iran to resume and accelerate its nuclear enrichment program. Mr. Biden reaffirmed on Thursday his belief that diplomacy offers the only hope of a lasting solution.

For Mr. Lapid, taking an uncompromising stance on Iran in the presence of the American president may have been a political imperative heading into November elections, when he hopes to convert his caretaker status to a full term as prime minister.

For years, Mr. Lapid has endeavored to avoid letting Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s former prime minister, outflank him to the right on security issues, though on Thursday Mr. Netanyahu, after meeting Mr. Biden, said he told the president “a credible offensive military option is needed.”

But Mr. Lapid’s challenge for Mr. Biden was softened by exuberantly friendly body language, and the session had none of the bristling tension that sometimes marked Mr. Netanyahu’s meetings with Mr. Biden when he was vice president. In private, some Israeli officials say they are focusing more on Iran’s support for terror groups in the Middle East, and that they think they would have sufficient warning if Iran actually moved to build a weapon.

Mr. Biden did not seem to take offense at Mr. Lapid’s public disagreement. Indeed, when Mr. Lapid finished speaking at the news conference, Mr. Biden offered praise. “An eloquent statement,” he said.

HEADLINE	07/14 Secret Service texts around Jan 6 erased
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/us/politics/secret-service-text-messages-jan-6.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Text messages sent and received by Secret Service agents around the time of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol last year have been erased, an inspector general said on Thursday, prompting concern from the House committee investigating the assault.</p> <p>In a letter obtained by The New York Times, the inspector general for the Department of Homeland Security, the parent agency of the Secret Service, reported that many of the agents' texts were erased as part of a device replacement program even after the inspector general had requested them as part of his inquiry into the events of Jan. 6.</p> <p>The letter was reported earlier by The Intercept.</p> <p>Representative Bennie Thompson, Democrat of Mississippi and the chairman of both the Jan. 6 committee and the House Homeland Security Committee, said he received a letter on Thursday from the inspector general informing him of the erased text messages.</p> <p>"It's concerning," Mr. Thompson said in an interview. "It's important for us to get as much information about how this discrepancy occurred."</p> <p>In a statement, the Secret Service disputed parts of the inspector general's findings, saying that it "lost" data on "some phones" as part of a preplanned three-month "system migration" in January 2021, but maintaining that no texts pertinent to the inquiry "had been lost in the migration."</p> <p>The agency said that the project was underway before it received notice from the inspector general to preserve its data, and that it did not "maliciously" delete text messages.</p> <p>The news comes as the Jan. 6 committee is investigating an incident involving former President Donald J. Trump and the Secret Service that occurred in his armored Suburban S.U.V. soon after his speech on the Ellipse ended on Jan. 6.</p> <p>Cassidy Hutchinson, a former White House aide, testified before the panel that a top White House official told her Mr. Trump had become enraged when his security detail refused to take him to the Capitol.</p> <p>Ms. Hutchinson said she had been told by Anthony M. Ornato, a deputy White House chief of staff, that Mr. Trump tried to grab the wheel of his vehicle when he was told he could not go to the Capitol to join his supporters, some of whom he had been told were armed. Ms. Hutchinson also said Mr. Ornato told her the president "lunged" at his lead Secret Service agent, Robert Engel.</p> <p>Secret Service officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, disputed some details in her account. But the officials did say Mr. Engel, Mr. Ornato and the driver of the Suburban were prepared to testify again before the committee and confirm another element of Ms. Hutchinson's testimony: that Mr. Trump demanded his agents take him to the Capitol, even after they emphasized that it was too dangerous for him to go.</p> <p>Both Mr. Engel and Mr. Ornato had already spoken to the committee's investigators before Ms. Hutchinson's testimony. Mr. Thompson said on Thursday that neither man had yet come in for another interview, but he said the panel was in discussions with them.</p> <p>The committee also interviewed an officer with Washington's Metropolitan Police Department who was part of the presidential motorcade that day and told the panel that Mr. Trump's departure from the Ellipse was delayed because of his anger over not being allowed to go to the Capitol, according to two people familiar with the officer's testimony.</p>

	<p>The officer was not in the S.U.V. with Mr. Trump, but heard communications concerning the altercation and corroborated that the incident occurred, the people said. The officer’s testimony was reported earlier by CNN.</p> <p>The disclosure about the Secret Service text messages came from Joseph V. Cuffari, the Homeland Security Department’s inspector general. He wrote to the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the department on Wednesday, saying that many Secret Service text messages from Jan. 5 and Jan. 6, 2021, “were erased as part of a device replacement program.”</p> <p>Mr. Cuffari wrote that the texts were erased after the inspector general’s office started an investigation into Jan. 6 and requested electronic communications from the agency. He also reported that Secret Service personnel were declining to provide records to his office without first having department lawyers review them, a process that he said was causing “weekslong delays” and “confusion.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Russia’s lethal reach deep into Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/europe/ukraine-vinnytsia-missile-attack.html
GIST	<p>VINNYTSIA, Ukraine — A volley of missiles hit a shopping center, a dance studio and a wedding hall in central Ukraine on Thursday, killing at least 23 people and setting off a frantic search for dozens more missing in the rubble, in the latest strike to hit civilian targets far from the front line.</p> <p>Seventy-one people, including three children, were hospitalized after three missiles hit the center of Vinnytsia, a typically sleepy provincial capital, leaving behind a harrowing scene of smoking ruins.</p> <p>The attack used cruise missiles fired by a Russian submarine in the Black Sea, President Volodymyr Zelensky’s office said. It said three children were among those killed in the strike on Vinnytsia, about 240 miles inland from the coast.</p> <p>“Every day, Russia destroys the civilian population, kills Ukrainian children, directs rockets at civilian objects,” Mr. Zelensky said. “What is this, if not an open act of terrorism?”</p> <p>Grooms once carried their brides from the wedding hall, a well-known local landmark, and a building next door once drew children to a photo studio producing school albums. The missiles hit a military officers’ club, a potential target, though one in a densely built-up central neighborhood of the city.</p> <p>Even hours later, as firefighters doused the smoldering husks of overturned cars with water, bystanders looked on in shock. The Ukrainian State Emergency Service said 29 people remained unaccounted for, and a search effort was underway in the rubble in a part of town where people run errands.</p> <p>Russia has paused its drive to conquer territory in eastern Ukraine as it regroups battered military units, but Moscow has served up daily reminders that its arsenal of long-range weapons can inflict death and destruction far from the battlefield, against civilian and military targets alike.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry, which has repeatedly denied targeting civilians, has not commented on the Vinnytsia strike.</p> <p>Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, denounced the Kremlin for the attack, which occurred as the Dutch government hosted a conference at The Hague intended to ensure that Russia would be held accountable for human rights violations in Ukraine.</p> <p>Even as the international community was gathering, Mr. Kuleba said, “Russia is committing another war crime.”</p> <p>On the eve of the conference, the United States called on Russia to immediately stop the forced deportation of Ukrainians to Russian-controlled territory. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said on Wednesday that the Russian authorities had “interrogated, detained, and forcibly deported” between</p>

900,000 and 1.6 million Ukrainian citizens, including 260,000 children, often to isolated regions in the Far East.

Mr. Blinken described the transfers as a breach of international law and “a war crime.” [Testimonies given to The New York Times and other news outlets](#) by deportees who escaped Russia have included accounts of interrogations, beatings and torture of those deemed to have ties to Ukraine’s armed forces.

Russia has acknowledged that 1.5 million Ukrainians are now in territory it controls, but has asserted that they were evacuated for their own safety.

Just before the strike in Vinnytsia, about 200 marriages and birth registrations had been planned, Vasyl Kavatsiuk, a regional justice ministry official, said in an interview in the damaged wedding hall, where the floor was covered in glass shards. Couples at the hall had evacuated before the strike when an air raid siren sounded.

Later on Thursday, workers carried out boxes of documents and computers to save what records they could.

Across the street in a wedding dress shop, where the windows were blown out, a torn wedding dress waved in the wind.

The strike rattled nerves in a city that had been returning to some sense of normalcy. The area had not seen significant attacks since early March, days after the Russian invasion, when [cruise missiles struck an airport in the city](#).

“Recently I brought my children back and now I don’t know what to do,” said Vadym Labun, 34, an emergency service worker, who had relocated his family to a village outside the city earlier in the war. “I still haven’t spoken with my wife.”

The strike was all the more shocking for destroying the shopping center that had been frequented by locals for decades. Cobblers repaired shoes at stands. Generations of teenagers had their ears pierced at an earring shop in the now-destroyed building.

The explosions shattered windows in shops and buildings for hundreds of yards around. A worker, who offered only his first name, Serhiy, out of concern for his security, was packing boxes from a shop that sold tea and coffee.

“We will rebuild it,” he said. “We are not going anywhere.”

The missiles damaged about 55 buildings and 40 cars, Viktor Vitovetsky, an emergency service official, said at a briefing on Thursday. More than 69 emergency workers were helping to clear the rubble and search for survivors, he said.

After the explosions, frightened residents stood on the sidewalks, watching a coiling plume of black smoke rise from the city center.

“I had no time to get scared because it was a sudden loud noise and a window in my room was blown off,” said Raisa Ludanova, a witness.

Vinnytsia, which had a prewar population of more than 370,000, lies west of the Dnipro River, hundreds of miles from the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, the focus of Moscow’s military campaign in recent weeks and the presumed target of its next ground offensive.

The strike came amid other recent attacks on populated civilian areas.

A Russian missile devastated a ceramics factory in the city of Sloviansk, in the eastern Donetsk Province, a regional official said late Wednesday. No casualties were immediately reported in the strike on the factory, which employed 270 people before the war, according to its website.

“The Russians are destroying our industrial potential,” said the regional military administrator, Pavlo Kyrylenko, calling the strike a “serious blow to the economy of the region.”

There was no immediate comment from Moscow on that attack.

In Bakhmut, a town in Donetsk that is an important stronghold for the Ukrainian military and a strategic target for Russian forces, both armies traded artillery fire for much of the day on Wednesday.

The town, with leafy streets and brick apartment buildings, had 100,000 residents before the invasion but now looks increasingly like a war zone, with large gashes torn through apartment complexes and wide craters in the ground.

On Tuesday evening, rockets smashed into several houses and damaged a school in Bakhmut. One person died and five others were wounded, the police said.

In the southern port city of Mykolaiv, five civilians died in a Russian strike on a hotel, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the president’s office, said on Thursday.

And in the eastern village of Chasiv Yar, in Donetsk, the State Emergency Service said the death toll from a strike on an apartment complex over the weekend had risen to 48, making it one of the deadliest attacks since the war began.

In June, a missile struck the Amstor shopping complex in Kremenchuk, a town south of Kyiv on the Dnipro River, killing 18 people. A nearby factory was a potential military target. And in April, a missile hit a railroad station in Kramatorsk, killing 59 people, including seven children, and wounding 100 others.

Some military analysts have said such strikes suggest that Russia is running low on precision weaponry and is resorting to less accurate rockets and missiles, or is firing haphazardly at targets, regardless of the collateral deaths. Others see the civilian casualties as part of an intentional campaign of brutality to break Ukraine’s will to resist.

A British military intelligence report on Thursday said Russia’s forces had “achieved no significant territorial advances over the last 72 hours” and that its ground troops were mainly focused on conducting small “probing assaults,” which are designed to test Ukrainian defenses.

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HEADLINE	07/14 War crimes investigations face challenges
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/15/world/russia-ukraine-war-news
GIST	<p>A Russian missile strike on a city in central Ukraine on Thursday killed at least 23 people, including three children. Two weeks earlier, missiles crashed into buildings near Odesa, killing 21. And for weeks in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, civilians bore the brunt of Russia’s assault — killed on their bicycles or while walking down the street, or executed with their hands bound.</p> <p>Indiscriminate Russian attacks on civilian areas have become a hallmark of its invasion, and this week, an international conference in The Hague sought to coordinate an approach to the overwhelming allegations of war crimes in Ukraine.</p> <p>But investigators face a formidable challenge, with as many as 20,000 war crimes investigations, multiple countries and international agencies at work, and a high burden of proof to reach a conviction. Complicating matters further, investigations are working while the war is still raging. The Kremlin has</p>

denied allegations against its forces, and Russia's Defense Ministry has [called graphic evidence of atrocities "fake."](#)

Prosecutors are keen to prevent a situation in which national and international prosecutors trip over one another in their search for evidence and witnesses. On Thursday, Karim Khan, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, stressed the need to coordinate investigations and avoid a "stampede" of many parties "running to the crime scenes."

At The Hague this week, representatives from 45 nations, including the United States and European Union countries, heard testimony about atrocities and pledged about \$20 million to assist the I.C.C., Ukraine's prosecutor general and efforts by the United Nations.

Experts say the International Criminal Court, established in 1998 to handle cases of mass atrocities, could be an important avenue for accountability for Russia, though there are many obstacles to that goal. Neither Russia nor Ukraine is among the court's 123 member nations, but Ukraine has granted the court jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory.

The Dutch foreign minister, Wopke Hoekstra, said at a news conference on Thursday that the Netherlands was considering setting up an ad hoc international Ukraine war crimes tribunal.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine addressed the conference by video even as rescuers were [digging through rubble](#) from Thursday's missile strike on Vinnytsia, a city far from the fighting on the eastern front. "This is the act of Russian terror," he said.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony J. Blinken, [said](#) Russian authorities have "deported" between 900,000 and 1.6 million Ukrainian citizens, including 260,000 children, from their homes into Russian territory, often to isolated regions in the far east. The unlawful transfer of protected persons, he said, was a breach of a Geneva Convention and a war crime.

Russia has acknowledged that 1.5 million Ukrainians are now in Russia, but has asserted that they were evacuated for their own safety.

The history of war crimes cases suggests it would be hard for prosecutors to bring cases over Russia's war in Ukraine.

Three of the most prominent prosecutions — against Slobodan Milosevic, Charles Taylor and Saddam Hussein — were brought against leaders who were out of power; no sitting president has ever been handed over to an international court.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has significant support at home and has developed strong ties with the leaders of other large nations, including [those of China, Turkey and Iran](#).

Proving war crimes, and especially proving who ordered a given action, is also very difficult. In the case of Mr. Putin, prosecutors would have to demonstrate that he issued specific orders that led to specific atrocities, that he knew about the crimes or that he did nothing to prevent them.

Prosecutors would also have to show that Russian commanders had intentionally targeted civilian structures, or struck them during attacks that failed to discriminate between civilian and military targets. Acquiring such evidence or testimony may be impossible in the near future, at least as long as the fighting is raging.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Fewer willing: military can't find recruits
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/us/us-military-recruiting-enlistment.html

FOUNTAIN, Colo. — The local Army recruiting station was empty. The normally reliable recruiting grounds at the nearby Walmart were a bust. With the Army still thousands of soldiers short of its recruiting goal, the station commander, Sgt. First Class James Pulliam, dressed head to toe in camouflage, scanned a strip-mall parking lot for targets.

He spotted a young woman getting out of a car, and put on his best salesman smile.

“Hey, how’d you know I was going to be here today!” the sergeant said with an affable Carolina drawl, as if greeting an old friend. “I’m going to help put you in the Army!”

These are tough times for military recruiting. Almost across the board, the armed forces are experiencing large shortfalls in enlistments this year — a deficit of thousands of entry-level troops that is on pace to be worse than any since just after the Vietnam War. It threatens to throw a wrench into the military’s machinery, leaving critical jobs unfilled and some platoons with too few people to function.

Covid-19 is part of the problem. Lockdowns during the pandemic have limited recruiters’ ability to forge bonds face to face with prospects. And the military’s vaccine mandate has kept some would-be troops away.

The current white-hot labor market, with many more jobs available than people to fill them, is also a factor, as rising civilian wages and benefits make military service less enticing.

But longer-term demographic trends are also taking a toll. Less than a quarter of young American adults are physically fit to enlist and have no disqualifying criminal record, a proportion that has shrunk steadily in recent years. And shifting attitudes toward military service mean that now only about one in 10 young people say they would even consider it.

To try to counter those forces, the military has pushed enlistment bonuses as high as \$50,000, and is offering “quick ship” cash of up to \$35,000 for certain recruits who can leave for basic training in 30 days. To broaden the recruiting pool, the service branches have loosened their restrictions on neck tattoos and other standards. In June, the Army even briefly dropped its requirement for a high school diploma, before deciding that was a bad move and rescinding the change.

The Army is the largest of the armed forces, and the recruiting shortfall is hitting it the hardest. As of late June, it had recruited only about 40 percent of the roughly 57,000 new soldiers it wants to put in boots by Sept. 30, the end of the fiscal year.

So Sergeant Pulliam, 41, a helicopter mechanic who turned to recruiting five years ago, was hunting for anyone who might want to join, even if they did not know it yet.

Like many soldiers who make recruiting their career, he believed in what he was selling because he knew what Army service had done for him. Before he enlisted in 2012, he was a 31-year-old warehouse worker in North Carolina, working extra shifts to support his three children. A year later, he was working on AH-64 Apaches, with his housing and education paid for by the Army.

“It changed my entire life,” he said. “And that’s the gift I have to give to other people. You just have to find the people that need it.” He chuckled and added, “That ain’t always easy.”

The young woman in the strip-mall parking lot was on her way to get a pizza, and looked confused when the tall man in green began pitching her on the benefits of serving her country. She eventually apologized politely and said she could not join up, gesturing to an insulin pump clipped to her shorts.

The sergeant made a mental note: diabetic, not fit to serve. But he did not give up.

“OK, well, just give me a name — one number I can call, right now,” he pressed. “You’ve got to know someone who might want to join. One number, and I’ll leave you alone.”

Seconds later, he was on the phone with one of the woman's friends. "She says you want to join the Army," the sergeant said, as if he were announcing the winning Powerball numbers. "Where you work? I can meet you when you get done."

The sergeant paused, turned and said, "Dude just hung up on me!"

Moments later, the friend was calling the woman's cellphone. Sergeant Pulliam smiled and leaned toward her conspiratorially. "Wouldn't it be weird if I answered?" he said. "It'd be like I was a Jedi recruiter. Let me take this one."

The woman giggled as the sergeant held her phone up and announced that he was ready to give the friend a second chance. The friend hung up again.

The other branches are not having any easier of a time. The Navy and Marine Corps do not release recruiting figures before the end of the fiscal year, a spokesman said, but both have acknowledged that it will be hard for them to meet quotas this year.

Even the Air Force, which has rarely had trouble attracting talent in the past, is about 4,000 recruits short of the level it typically reaches by midsummer.

"Bottom line, up front, we are in a week-to-week dogfight," said Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas Jr., commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service. "We are growing hopeful that we may be able to barely make this year's mission, but it's uncertain."

General Thomas said the short-term problem of Covid-19 kept recruiters away from county fairs, street festivals and their most productive hunting grounds, high schools. The relationships that recruiters were not able to cultivate face to face during the pandemic's early stages, he said, mean there is now a drought of graduates signing on the dotted line.

A modest recruiting bump from snappy ads the service ran before screenings of "Top Gun: Maverick" helped a bit, he said. But the general pointed to larger, longer-term concerns about the shrinking pool of young Americans who are both able and willing to serve. In recent years, the Pentagon has found that about 76 percent of adults ages 17 to 24 are either too obese to qualify or have other medical issues or criminal histories that would make them ineligible to serve without a waiver.

And what the military calls propensity — the share of young adults who would consider serving — has fallen steadily for several years. It stood at 13 percent before the pandemic began, General Thomas said, but is now 9 percent.

"There are just lower levels of trust with the U.S. government and the military," he said.

Of course, maintaining one of the world's largest militaries entirely with volunteers has never been easy, and this is not the first time in the 49 years since the United States ended the draft that recruitment has fallen short.

When civilian jobs are plentiful, as they are now, the military tries to compete using two tactics: Sweetening the deal with signing bonuses, better pay and other enticements, and lowering standards a bit to enlist people who might not otherwise qualify.

The military has also adapted by downsizing. The number of active-duty service members is now about half of what it was in the 1980s, and is projected to keep decreasing.

That makes for smaller, easier-to-meet quotas, recruiters say, but it also diminishes the military's most reliable advertising tool: its people. Research has repeatedly shown that young adults who know someone who has served — a parent, a coach, a teacher — are more likely to enlist than those who do not.

	<p>That pattern has made the armed forces something of a family business, and led to some communities, many of them in the Southeast, supplying a disproportionate share of recruits. But even in those kinds of communities, recruiting has been tough this year.</p> <p>The city of Fountain, a few miles from Fort Carson, is a patchwork of working-class neighborhoods with strong military ties. But the recruiting station here has not met its goals for three months.</p> <p>On a recent evening, Sergeant Pulliam met with six prospective recruits at a park for a weekly workout of push-ups and situps. In the group were three recent high school graduates who had been planning for years to join; a young woman trying to get away from a home life she did not want to talk about; and a 26-year-old man named Francisco Borja, whose father had been in the Army.</p> <p>Mr. Borja had tried to join up before but was rejected because of poor eyesight. He was hoping the Army would take him this time around.</p> <p>“I want to do it for my family, my kids,” he said. “To better our lives.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Human disease outbreaks from animals rise
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/outbreaks-from-animals-in-africa-surge-by-60-in-last-decade/
GIST	<p>LONDON — The number of outbreaks of diseases that jumped from animals to humans in Africa has surged by more than 60% in the last decade, the World Health Organization said, a worrying sign the planet could face increased animal-borne diseases like monkeypox, Ebola and coronavirus in the future.</p> <p>There has been a 63% rise in the number of animal diseases breaching the species barrier from 2012 to 2022, as compared to the decade before, the U.N. health agency said in a statement on Thursday.</p> <p>There was a particular spike from 2019 to 2020, when diseases originating in animals that later infected humans, made up half of all significant public health events in Africa, said WHO. Diseases like Ebola and other hemorrhagic fevers were responsible for 70% of those outbreaks, in addition to illnesses like monkeypox, dengue, anthrax and plague.</p> <p>“We must act now to contain zoonotic diseases before they can cause widespread infections and stop Africa from becoming a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases,” WHO’s Africa director, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti said in a statement.</p> <p>While diseases in animals had infected people for centuries in Africa, recent developments like quicker travel across the continent have made it easier for viruses to cross borders, she said.</p> <p>WHO also noted that Africa has the world’s fastest-growing population, which increases urbanization and reduces roaming areas for wild animals. Scientists also fear that outbreaks that may have once been contained to distant, rural areas can now spread more quickly to Africa’s large cities with international travel links, that might then carry the diseases around the world.</p> <p>During the West Africa Ebola outbreak that began in 2014, it was not until the disease arrived in capital cities that its spread became explosive, ultimately killing more than 10,000 people and arriving in several cities in Europe and the U.S.</p> <p>Until May, monkeypox had not been known to cause significant outbreaks beyond central and West Africa, where it has sickened people for decades. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are now more than 11,000 cases worldwide in 65 countries, the majority of which had not previously reported monkeypox.</p>

	WHO announced that it will hold an emergency meeting next week to assess if monkeypox should be declared a global emergency. Last month, the agency said the outbreak did not yet warrant the declaration but said it would review issues such as the possibility that monkeypox might be infecting more vulnerable populations like children, and whether the virus is causing more severe disease.
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HEADLINE	07/14 'Highly transmissible' BA.5 in reinfections
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/highly-transmissible-covid-19-variant-causing-reinfections-washington/281-5556fb29-49e4-4d8f-ae2d-c6231bf53388
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — It's being called highly transmissible, elusive and it's fueling a rise in coronavirus cases in Washington state and across the country.</p> <p>The omicron subvariant BA.5 is the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Washington and now throughout the U.S., according to public health officials and new data released Wednesday.</p> <p>The virus is catching many who are vaccinated and boosted off guard because residents are getting reinfected.</p> <p>Even libraries across the Puget Sound region are making adjustments. Inside the Beacon Hill Library Branch, while checking out books, free COVID-19 tests are available for residents to take home. It is one of the many precautions inside the library as COVID-19 cases continue to rise, fueled by BA.5.</p> <p>"I've heard a little bit about it," said Jenny Pohly. "The BA.5, but I'm not that concerned. I just had COVID."</p> <p>Pohly said coronavirus is a topic of conversation among her family and friends again.</p> <p>"It's so weird," Pohly said. "I feel like every month now a bunch of people will get it, and then it goes away, and then a bunch of people will get it."</p> <p>New numbers from the Washington State Department of Health show BA.5 is now the dominant variant in Washington.</p> <p>"Maybe I'm a little delusional, but I just had it... how can I get it again?" Pohly asked rhetorically.</p> <p>Dr. Pavitra Roychoudhury of the University of Washington Virology Lab explained how this variant is leading to more cases.</p> <p>"It's a variant that's been shown to be highly transmissible, and it's also been shown to be really good at evading antibody protections," Roychoudhury said.</p> <p>Roychoudhury believes now is not a time to let your guard down.</p> <p>"I am quite concerned by the fact that the numbers of cases are still so high, the percent positivity rate for samples that are coming into our lab is still well over 20%, and it has been above 20%, or around 20%, for over a month now," Roychoudhury said. "That tells me that there's this sustained level of community transmission that's going on."</p> <p>Seattle Public Libraries adjusted its hours in response to the rise in cases.</p> <p>"The reason we are reducing hours is because of staffing levels and impacts of COVID cases," said Andrew Harbison, the interim director of public services at Seattle Public Libraries.</p> <p>Harbison said they increased staffing levels by 9%, but with sick calls and other leave, Harbison said it is back down to 8%.</p>

	<p>“So, we're kind of back where we started,” he added.</p> <p>“I think the most important thing is to get boosted if one has not been boosted yet,” Roychoudhury said. “The boosters, with the current boosters that we have, were designed based on the original SARS-COVID-2 sequence or the original lineage. So, what's currently being developed is a booster that is specific to the omicron lineages that are currently circulating. And that will help a lot.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Hot housing market finally cools down
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/puget-sounds-hot-housing-market-finally-cools-down
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle’s hot housing market is chilling, leaving many asking, ‘Is it a seller’s market or a buyer’s market?’</p> <p>Instead of leaning too far to one side or the other, real estate agents in the Puget Sound region say the market is normalizing due to some quick changes happening in recent weeks.</p> <p>The number of homes on the market started rising, but so did interest rates, pushing some buyers out and forcing others to lower their price point so they could afford the monthly payment.</p> <p>All of this was also idling a number of sellers, even those motivated to sell.</p> <p>“Just all of a sudden, you’re seeing properties now that are not getting full offers, that aren’t moving at all, and even great properties,” said Kim Davis of Davis Group Real Estate. “We just went under contract on a deal over the weekend (and) our buyers got it for less than list.”</p> <p>That's good news for buyers, bad for sellers.</p> <p>“So, we have dropped the price \$65,000, which is a lot of money for us,” Heidi Nagel said from her house in Tacoma.</p> <p>Nagel said she and her partner are downsizing from their four-bedroom home now that they're empty nesters.</p> <p>They did their planning and their research, meeting with their agent back in February. They mapped out their prime list date to be mid-May.</p> <p>“But we ended up hitting it the day interest rates were hiked for the first time,” Nagel said.</p> <p>Their first few open houses brought in some foot traffic, but no offers. That empty nesting plan included renting an apartment, sure that the house would sell just as quickly as others. But now, 57 days later, they’re still looking for a buyer, who right now is definitely in the driver's seat.</p> <p>“It’s not basically saying, ‘Oh, my God, there’s a hole in the roof and it’s the only house that we like in this vicinity within 15 miles, how much more can I pay you to get it?’ Ferreri said. “That’s not happening.”</p> <p>He said now buyers can make demands of their sellers, such as repairs. Nagel has already put a new roof on her house, working to make it more attractive.</p> <p>“Move-in ready homes are the ones that move the fastest,” said Davis, who is the listing agent on Nagel’s home.</p> <p>“I think people really need to understand and say, ‘I’m prepared to spend months on the market now in a way that we haven’t had to do in the Puget Sound area,’” Nagel said.</p>

	<p>The apartment she was renting is empty now. Too afraid of crime hitting an empty house, she moved back in, away from her partner, who's now working in another city.</p> <p>“This is hard,” Nagel said. “We are stranded between an apartment and a house. We are physically separated because this house won’t sell.”</p> <p>Ferreri gave me a prime example of that. He listed a house in Woodinville back in March which sold in six days. Then in June, he listed the house across the street. He said there wasn't a single look the first week. That house took 26 days to sell and sold only after they lowered the price.</p> <p>Nagel’s house has now been on the market for 57 days.</p> <p>In this market, Ferreri says it’s also important agents work together for their clients. He said it's much more common right now for agents to work together.</p> <p>Each side, the buyer and the seller, want what's best for their clients, and by working together, he says they can achieve that.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Fired firefighters file \$171M tort claim
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/local-firefighters-terminated-over-vaccine-mandate-pursue-171-million-tort-claim
GIST	<p>ISSAQUAH, Wash. — The decision not to get vaccinated for COVID-19 earlier this year cost them their jobs and now 10 former employees with Eastside Fire and Rescue are demanding tens of millions of dollars in damages.</p> <p>The firefighters said they suffered discrimination from district leadership and have filed a tort claim seeking \$171 million in damages.</p> <p>The firefighters behind the legal claim lost their jobs for not getting the COVID-19 vaccine, something Gov. Jay Inslee mandated for all health care workers once the vaccines were being rolled out.</p> <p>Exemptions to the mandate were granted but Eastside's top officials declined to accommodate the employees to allow them to return to fire engines or aid cars where they would have to interact with patients.</p> <p>“They actually denied that accommodation,” said Frank Dahlquist, who served as a captain for the department. “They wouldn't allow us to go to those open dayshift positions and decided to terminate them.”</p> <p>Since their dismissal, the former firefighters said overtime costs have soared and staffing cuts have hurt response times to emergencies.</p> <p>A group of firefighters are taking their fight to get their jobs back to court.</p> <p>“Public safety is being compromised,” said Rocky Martinez, who had been with the department for 18 years. “Look at the specialty operations. Look at what staffing arrangements were done. Look at what rigs were pulled out of service.”</p> <p>The fired workers said they are victims of discrimination and on Thursday said they have slapped the fire board with a tort claim for \$171 million.</p> <p>However, they said all they really want is to go back to serving the community.</p>

	<p>"Many of us have been unemployed now for many, many months (and) people are losing homes, they are having to move out of state," Dahlquist said. "The hardship is just overwhelming especially when our hearts are here, right here, with Eastside Fire and Rescue."</p> <p>The firefighters said other counties have welcomed unvaccinated firefighters back to work and Eastside Fire can as well.</p> <p>However, Chief Jeff Clark said he is acting on the medical and legal advice he's been given, as well as the agreements made with the firefighters' union months ago.</p> <p>"I would say I have full discretion but there's parameters to that," Clark said. "I'm not going to trump what a doctor's advice is to us and I feel like we vetted that. And then legally, we have consulted numerous attorneys on this over a number of months now and we are following all the steps we should as a responsible public agency."</p> <p>In addition to the multi-million dollar legal filing, seven complaints have been made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission involving allegations of age, sex or religious discrimination.</p> <p>It's likely that more EEOC complaints will be filed.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 WDFW activity restrictions for eastern WA
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/wildfire/washington-campfire-restrictions/293-cb47ce6d-fb4d-4229-97ba-a783922a2a4c
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Starting Friday, July 15, The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will begin enforcing restrictions on campfires and other activities in WDFW-managed lands and water access areas in Eastern Washington.</p> <p>The new restrictions are part of the WDFW's actions to decrease fire risk on state wildlife and other WDFW-managed lands.</p> <p>According to the WDFW's website, the following will be restricted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires or campfires, including those in fire rings. Personal camp stoves and lanterns fueled by propane, liquid petroleum, or liquid petroleum gas are allowed. • Discharge of firearms for target shooting or other purposes by anyone not engaged in lawful hunting. • Smoking, except in an enclosed vehicle. Do not throw lit cigarettes out your window. • Welding and operating chainsaws, including the use of an acetylene torch or other open flame. • Operating a motor vehicle away from developed roads. Parking is permitted within designated parking areas, including developed campgrounds and trailheads; and in areas without vegetation that are within 10 feet of roadways. <p>"Due to the wet and cool start to the summer, we delayed restrictions this year beyond July 1, allowing people longer opportunity to enjoy campfires," Cynthia Wilkerson, WDFW's Lands Division Manager, said in a written statement. "But wildfire risk is increasing this week, and it's time to take proper precautions to preserve public recreation lands, wildlife habitat, public health, and safety for local communities."</p> <p>All restrictions will remain in effect until further notice.</p>
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	For more information and updates on these restrictions, visit the WDFW's website .

HEADLINE	07/14 'American Pickers' coming to Washington
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SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/washington/american-pickers-tv-series-coming-to-washington/293-287139c8-b0db-4b73-a687-ca0ba88efc55
GIST	<p>MOSES LAKE, Wash. — The TV show “American Pickers” will film episodes in Washington state in October, according to a press release from Cineflix Productions, which produces the show, as reported by our news partners, the Columbia Basin Herald.</p> <p>“American Pickers” is a documentary series that explores the world of antique “picking” on The History Channel. The show follows skilled pickers as they hunt for America’s most valuable antiques, the release said. Along the way, they want to meet characters with remarkable and exceptional items. They hope to give historically significant objects a new lease on life while learning a thing or two about America’s past, according to the release.</p> <p>The show’s producers are looking for leads, the release said. Anyone who knows of a large, private collection or accumulation of antiques that the pickers can spend the better part of the day looking through is invited to send their name and phone number and the location and description of the collection with photos to: americanpickers@cineflix.com or to call (646) 493-2184.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Pierce Co. 2nd probable monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263484178.html
GIST	<p>Local health officials on Thursday said they were investigating a second probable case of monkeypox in Pierce County.</p> <p>According to a statement from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, a man in his 50s tested positive Wednesday.</p> <p>“He was not hospitalized and is isolating at home,” the health department noted in its update.</p> <p>Officials said the case is not related to Pierce County’s first probable case, which was reported July 9, and does not appear to be travel-related.</p> <p>The state reported its first probable case in King County in May. King County since then has reported 29 cases.</p> <p>The viral disease can cause a rash that looks like bumps, blisters or ulcers. Before the rash, some people have flu-like symptoms including fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, swollen lymph nodes and fatigue.</p> <p>Monkeypox spreads during close, physical contact.</p> <p>Antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox can be used to treat and prevent monkeypox.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 No charges: Tacoma cop drove thru crowd
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article263488773.html
GIST	<p>A Tacoma police officer who drove his vehicle through a crowd of pedestrians Jan. 23, 2021 during an illegal street racing event won’t be charged with any crimes, Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney Mary Robnett told Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore on Thursday. The man who apparently was run over in the incident is facing criminal charges.</p> <p>On that evening in 2021, officer Khanh Phan arrived at a “sideshow”, an illegal gathering of vehicles that take over a public street to spin in circles.</p>

While in his vehicle, Phan was surrounded by some of the estimated 100 people gathered at the intersection of Pacific Avenue and South 9th Street to watch the event.

Numerous videos of the incident show that some members of the crowd pounded on and kicked Phan's police SUV.

Phan briefly tried to back up but then drove forward through the crowd. He said he was in fear for his life.

Several people were knocked over, and one person appears to have been run over by one of the vehicle's wheels.

"We will not file criminal charges against any of the involved officers, nor would we file charges against anyone, police officer or not, who had been similarly unlawfully restrained and attacked by a violent mob," Prosecutor Mary Robnett said in a letter to Moore.

The Prosecutor's Office identified one spectator, Anthony Huff-McKay, who they say instigated the crowd to attack responding police officers. According to the letter, he shouted, "Block the cops," and obscenities.

"The spectator crowd responded and swarmed around the lead patrol car driven by (Officer) Phan," the letter states.

Huff-McKay was the person who might have been run over the cruiser.

Robnett said Phan's actions were reasonable and necessary.

"He took a measured response to an unruly, aggressive, and dangerous mob," Robnett said. "To the extent moving his vehicle forward into an unruly mob of individuals who intentionally positioned themselves in front of his vehicle constitutes intentional use of force, it is justified under these circumstances."

Efforts by The News Tribune to determine Phan's employment status Thursday were unsuccessful.

POSSIBLE CHARGES AGAINST SPECTATOR

Huff-McKay, 21, was taken to a hospital with a partially collapsed lung and pain.

The Prosecuting Attorney's office said there is sufficient evidence to charge Huff-McKay with unlawful imprisonment, malicious mischief and obstruction. He has been summoned to Superior Court July 28 to answer those charges, court records show.

Videos from that night contain the sound of a vehicle revving. That was determined to be coming from one of the street racers, Robnett said.

Another responding officer, Christopher Bain, was in a different vehicle behind Phan's. Prior to the Pacific and 9th call, they responded to a different illegal street racing gathering at Portland Avenue and East 11th Street. That crowd had apparently relocated to the Pacific Avenue scene.

Both officers had their emergency lights on, and Phan used an air horn in an attempt to disperse the crowd, Robnett said.

"(Officer) Bain saw (Officer) Phan's vehicle slowly inching forward again through the crowd, but the movement of the car seemed to increase the crowd's hostility," Robnett said. "Bain was trying to formulate a rescue plan because he was fearful for the safety of (Officer) Phan and fearful for his own safety."

Another officer, Rader Cockle, arrived after hearing Phan on the radio.

He saw Phan drive away and then saw Huff-McKay lying in the street and radioed for medical aid and backup. His vehicle was soon boxed in by civilian vehicles.

“Immediately, several adult males sprinted toward his car and started trying to open the driver’s door and striking the driver-side of his car,” Robnett said. “More of the crowd surrounded his car and he heard people screaming (obscenities) ‘Get him,’ ‘Pull him out,’ ‘Drag him out,’ and ‘Kill that cop’.”

The rear window of Cockle’s vehicle was shattered.

“He feared that with the window gone someone in the crowd would be able to access his loaded rifle, and the crowd was still yelling that they were going to kill him,” Robnett said.

Using his public address system, Cockle warned the drivers he would ram them if they did not move. The drivers complied.

The letter delves into the officers’ states of mind during the incident, both their fear of being harmed and the potential for further violence among the crowd.

“As the crowd was trying to open (Cockle’s door), he felt at any moment that his driverside window or door latch would fail and he would be drug out of the vehicle and beat to death as it was live-streamed on social media,” Robnett wrote. T

he letter extensively discusses the fear of and reports of Molotov cocktails — bottles with flammable liquid and stuffed with a cloth. No conclusive evidence of the devices were found. It also contains references to police officers being aware of armed spectators at previous sideshows.

USE OF FORCE INVESTIGATION

The Pierce County Force Investigation Team (PCFIT) that investigated the incident interviewed more than 20 witnesses.

Some refused to cooperate with investigators.

Others said they were only spectators when evidence showed they were participants, Robnett said. Robnett concluded that Phan did not intend to hit or harm the crowd surrounding his car.

“He moved his car forward only when he thought he saw a bit of a ‘gap’ in the crowd and tried to escape from the attack,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/14 How safe to travel as BA.5 spreads?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/07/14/travel-ba5-omicron-variant/
GIST	<p>Summer travel is booming, and while most pandemic-era restrictions in airports are gone, the coronavirus has more surprises in store.</p> <p>BA.5, the latest subvariant of omicron, is spreading rapidly, becoming the dominant variant in the United States and creating a wave of covid-19 cases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reporting an average of more than 120,000 new cases a day in the United States, and that does not include the massive estimates of people who are not reporting results from home tests. Hospitalizations in the United States have increased 10 percent over the past week, according to tracking data from The Washington Post.</p> <p>While people have been relying on their vaccinations and antibodies from previous infections, experts say those factors offer limited protection against the BA.5 variant. President Biden’s administration is urging Americans to get boosted and take advantage of antiviral treatments.</p>

Given the uncertainty of the moment, we consulted health experts for some advice on best practices and staying safe.

Where is BA.5 spreading?

Andy Pekosz, a virologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, expects the BA.5 variant to spread all over the world. “Anywhere it’s detected, it’s increasing at a faster rate than most other omicron variants that are around,” he said.

Jorge Moreno, an assistant professor of medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, echoed this sentiment, adding that community spread is high. Moreno said data shows that a person can become sick with BA.5 even if they were recently infected with an omicron variant.

“We can assume that it is everywhere because of the high transmissibility,” said Lin H. Chen, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School. Even if it hasn’t been reported or confirmed yet, “it is likely present already,” Chen added.

Should I still fly right now?

Travelers should weigh their comfort with the risk of infection against the merits of a trip. The United States dropped its requirement for coronavirus testing to enter the country in June, but the CDC recommends getting a viral test as close to your departure time as possible. If you are feeling any covid-19 symptoms, you should change or postpone your flight.

“We know with covid-19 and other respiratory viruses that you’re probably infectious just before the time you start to show symptoms,” Pekosz said.

It’s best to err on the side of caution and avoid flying even if you come down with a runny nose or small cough. If you feel healthy, however, it’s important to wear a high-quality mask — like an N95 or KN95 — and practice social distancing when possible. Of course, on a crowded airplane, you can only do so much when it comes to distancing. But Pekosz suggests that when you’re at the airport, try to stay six feet away from other travelers until it is time to board the flight.

How safe is it to take a cruise?

If you’re considering traveling on a cruise, you should assess your risk and decide what you’re comfortable with. “Covid can more easily spread in close quarters on board ships,” Moreno said.

While you do have the option to isolate in your room, many cruise activities are communal. Even though cruises have testing procedures in place for passengers and ship staff, the coronavirus has consistently found its way on board. As of Wednesday, 93 of the 94 ships reporting coronavirus data to the CDC were under observation because they met the threshold for investigation (cases in 0.3 percent of total crew and passengers).

“If you get into a situation where you’re on a boat and you have some outbreaks, it’s very likely that you’ll get exposed and get infected,” Pekosz said.

However, Joseph Khabbaza, a critical-care medicine specialist at Cleveland Clinic, said cruises “can be done relatively safely because there is ability to isolate in one’s room” and “take advantage of distance and ventilation by being outdoors.”

Where should I wear a mask while traveling?

Wearing a mask when you’re in crowded, indoor spaces while traveling is a key way to prevent the coronavirus from spreading. “That includes shuttle buses, going through security, in the terminal and while on the plane,” said Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

While wearing a mask on an airplane is no longer required, many health experts advise that travelers still mask up when they’re flying.

“I would advise masking at the airport and any form of public transportation given the high community spread,” Moreno said.

You don’t have to wear a mask on planes. Do it anyway, experts say.

How long should I wait to travel after getting infected?

There are two main factors to consider when it comes to traveling after getting infected — a lack of symptoms and a negative rapid coronavirus test. Benjamin suggests waiting to travel until 10 days after your symptoms started — or 10 days after a positive test, using whichever one came first as a benchmark so you don’t travel while you’re infectious.

He added that you should avoid traveling for at least five days if you come into close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with the coronavirus.

Should I cancel my trip abroad?

According to global tracking data from The Post, as of Thursday global hot spots for reported cases per capita included popular travel destinations such as Italy, France, Greece, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. A map on the same page showed clusters of surges across Western Europe and Central America.

People who plan to travel abroad should follow the guidance of the countries where they plan to travel, Benjamin said. This includes any testing, vaccination or masking requirements that might be in place.

It is also important to make sure you are fully vaccinated and boosted before traveling. Unvaccinated people and people who have an increased risk for severe disease or hospitalization should reconsider plans to travel abroad, Chen said. She recommended that people buy travel insurance and travel medical insurance, in case an infection forces them to isolate on a trip or delay traveling.

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HEADLINE	07/14 BA.5 growing portion of Covid cases in WA
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/ba-5-makes-up-growing-portion-of-covid-cases-in-wa-state-data-says/
GIST	<p>Omicron’s BA.5 subvariant continued to tear through Washington state in June, more than tripling its share of the state’s sequenced COVID-19 cases and contributing to high levels of infection in King County.</p> <p>As of the week ending June 25, BA.5 constituted 37.3% of sequenced COVID cases, up from 9.8% during the week of May 29, according to the most recently available data released Wednesday.</p> <p>The BA.5 variant is now the dominant version of SARS-CoV-2 in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And while it’s hard to get an exact count — given the popularity of at-home testing — there are indications that reinfections and hospitalizations are increasing.</p> <p>In King County, rates of COVID community transmission remain high — higher than they were during the peak of last summer’s delta surge, but still far from January’s omicron-wave levels, county health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said in a Thursday news briefing.</p> <p>As of Thursday, the county counted an average of about 941 daily cases, compared to about 620 daily cases in mid-August last year.</p> <p>While COVID deaths remain relatively low, virus hospitalizations in King County have tripled since April, though they’re not rising as quickly as they did during past waves, Duchin said.</p> <p>“The COVID-19 pandemic with the rapid evolution of new variants is challenging us in new ways we did not anticipate, and it requires long-term sustained prevention strategies,” he said. “It’s critical to understand that complacency is not the cure.”</p>

Although there is a significant undercount of the true infection rate, the share of positive tests is surging and is now higher than during most other waves of the pandemic. [BA.5 and BA.4 are the most transmissible versions of the coronavirus yet](#), evading immunity from previous infections and vaccines.

COVID cases in Washington are on the rise but it's difficult for health authorities to put a finger on accurate rates of transmission.

"Cases overall seem to be slightly rising at this stage, though it is difficult to determine if these short-term trends are more representative of testing rates versus actual infections," Rachael Sims, spokesperson for the Washington State Department of Health, said in a statement.

Besides at-home tests not being reported to health authorities, Sims added that some residents may not even get tested for various reasons.

In King County, there are no definite plans to return to indoor mask mandates, but the county is "actively considering" if and when additional public health requirements might be necessary, Duchin said.

"It's not an easy question because things change over time," he said. "For example, if we were seeing the level of severity before people were as well-vaccinated as they are now, or during the delta surge, I think we would be moving more quickly to such measures."

Instead, public health leaders are first hoping community members will voluntarily renew their commitment to indoor masking, distancing, good indoor air ventilation and getting vaccinated and boosted.

"COVID-19 is not one and done," Duchin said. "We're not going to be able to have infinite series of mandates."

Restrictions have a role if there is a serious need for short-term and immediate improvement, he said, adding that for the long term, the public needs to take steps to protect themselves and others.

He attributed much of the current surge to the "unexpected rapid evolution of highly infectious COVID variants, one after the next."

As of a few weeks ago, the CDC estimated that the BA.5 subvariant, and to a lesser degree BA.4 — both of which became dominant omicron subvariants in South Africa in April — are causing between 65% and 90% of infections in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, Duchin noted.

According to DOH data, the BA.2.12.1 omicron subvariant made up close to half of all state sequenced COVID-19 cases in June, while BA.2 declined from 37% at the start of the month to 11.7% three weeks later.

The sequencing data comes from 6.2% of all reported COVID-19 cases in the state, which DOH randomly selected for sequencing. Its Wednesday report includes data from over 60 labs across the state, which either contributed testing specimens or sequencing data.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Inflation hits record 10.1% in Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/inflation-hits-record-10-1-in-seattle-as-prices-keep-climbing/
GIST	<p>Inflation in the Seattle metro area hit a four-decade high in June as prices for groceries, gas and basic essentials continued to climb, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>While U.S. consumer prices hit a four-decade high last month at 9.1%, the increase in the Seattle area was even more extreme, statistics released Wednesday showed.</p>

Compared to June 2021, Seattle's Consumer Price Index, a shorthand measure for the cost of living, grew 10.1%, the largest increase on record since the bureau began collecting June data for Seattle in 1998. The national inflation rate is higher than it has been since 1981.

This continues [the trend of accelerated price increases since December 2021](#) that is also [eating into wage gains recorded in the Seattle area](#). Since April, consumer prices rose 3.2%.

Goods and services prices monitored in the index are everyday items, ranging from groceries to appliances, transportation or housing — often referred to as a market basket of goods and services. The items are weighted in a monthly or annual household budget to measure the inflation rate, or how the increase in prices affects the average person.

While prices for gas, food and beverages increased, prices of less volatile items, like household furnishings, continued to swell as did housing, used cars and trucks and medical care. Only the price of clothing witnessed a minor decline.

Considering the rising cost of daily necessities and the demographics of who is more likely to rent or struggle to purchase a home, a new car or medical insurance, this data offers further evidence that Seattle's inflation is particularly impacting low and middle-income households and communities of color.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Twitter 'rando' named subvariant Centaurus
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/14/centaurus-coronavirus-subvariant-world-health/
GIST	<p>"I have just named BA.2.75 variant after a galaxy," wrote Xabier Ostale, who often uses his Twitter account to share coronavirus news.</p> <p>He dubbed the latest coronavirus subvariant that's drawing attention from scientists "Centaurus."</p> <p>The name appears to be sticking.</p> <p>Since his July 1 tweet, mentions of Centaurus referring to the omicron subvariant, which has been reported in about 10 countries, abounded not just on Twitter — but in headlines around the world. Google searches for the term shot up.</p> <p>"Korea detects first case of Centaurus COVID subvariant," one South Korean daily announced Thursday.</p> <p>The nickname, a reference to a faraway galaxy that is also the name of the father of centaurs in Greek mythology, has reignited a debate about how best to name coronavirus variants and how it affects public perception.</p> <p>A few complained the names shouldn't be left up to what one user called "randos on Twitter."</p> <p>Ostale could not immediately be reached for comment on Thursday. But a chorus of voices said the catchy name could help raise awareness about this phase of the pandemic as variants circulate and fatigue grows. The World Health Organization has sought to remind people that the pandemic is "nowhere near over," with the latest omicron offshoots driving up infections around the world.</p> <p>Emma Hodcroft, a molecular epidemiologist and researcher at Switzerland's University of Bern, said that in the absence of an "easy, mutual language" about a variant, people would probably look for one.</p> <p>As variants with the perhaps less-memorable names BA.4 and BA.5 fuel infections in the United States and Europe, the WHO has neither assigned BA.2.75 a name — nor taken to calling it Centaurus. The agency says it is tracking BA.2.75 but has not deemed it a "variant of concern" and said it remains early to determine its ability to evade immunity or its severity.</p>

Its designation as an omicron subvariant “under monitoring” means the health body is watching for “sufficient evidence” that its characteristics differ substantially from variants before it — in which case it could get an official “WHO label.”

The Netherlands said Wednesday that it had joined nearly 10 countries that have detected cases of BA.2.75, including Canada, Britain and Australia. As scientists study its rise in India, where it was first identified in May, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control classified BA.2.75 as a “variant under monitoring,” while noting there was not yet enough data on it.

The World Health Organization has named variants of interest or concern using letters of the Greek alphabet “to assist with public discussions.” The decision stemmed last year from meetings with scientists and WHO officials to come up with easy-to-pronounce names and stop the “stigmatizing labels” from when many people described variants by the countries where they were identified.

They considered everything from bird species to Greek gods. Problems that popped up included trademarks and the possibility they could eventually run out of Greek letters.

“With Centaurus, as far as naming goes, it’s fine in that it’s not geographical, it’s not harmful, it’s not misleading. Nobody’s getting it mixed up with a constellation,” said Hodcroft, who was part of the group that brainstormed nomenclature. “But it may not be so lucky next time.”

She described the Greek letter system as “a success” and said there was a plan to use constellation names afterward, but she added it may have been easier before when variants were “all much more distinct.”

“We’ve moved into a new phase of the pandemic now with these variants ... They’re all kind of part of the same family,” Hodcroft said. It may be time to revisit the naming system for subvariants, she added.

“If nobody was writing or talking about BA.2.75, Centaurus probably wouldn’t have gotten much traction,” she said.

Since his label gained attention, Ostale seems to agree. “People will understand much better nicknames than letters and numbers,” he wrote this week in a tweet.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Gates: prevent next pandemic global GERM
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/bill-gates-wants-to-prevent-the-next-pandemic-one-solution-a-global-germ-team/
GIST	<p>To Bill Gates, it’s obvious world leaders will fund a global health team to prevent the next pandemic.</p> <p>“We’re just not that irrational,” the billionaire philanthropist and self-proclaimed data nerd said of the alternative.</p> <p>Gates’ pitch: a Global Epidemic Response and Mobilization team — or GERM, humorously, for short.</p> <p>In a video interview from the Kirkland offices of his private investment firm, he said that for an estimated \$1 billion a year, with the U.S. likely chipping in \$250 million, the team would be “the best bargain you’ll ever see.”</p> <p>“More Americans died in [the pandemic] than Americans died in all the wars put together,” Gates said. “This thing was, you know, superb.” Compared to the cost of addressing climate change or opioid abuse, for example, “the sums involved here are actually pretty modest.”</p>

Gates' proposed team is a key idea in his book "How to Prevent the Next Pandemic," which was published in May with the intention of prompting debate — not just about GERM, but also about improving testing, speeding vaccine and treatment development, and shoring up health systems worldwide.

Yet Gates — whose fortune and foundation, co-chaired with [ex-wife Melinda French Gates](#), give him an outsized influence on public health — said discussion about the team "has started out a little bit slower than I expected."

Pandemic prevention is "not a huge topic in the Congress, or even in the executive branch, right at the moment," he said.

Gates' book arrived at an odd time in the arc of COVID-19. New coronavirus variants have been spreading fast but are less lethal. And many people have shed their masks and sense of urgency to beat back the virus, instead turning their attention to other issues: the war in Ukraine, U.S. Supreme Court rulings, Jan. 6 hearings.

World leaders, too, are not showing the sense of urgency about the pandemic some would like.

"Incrementalism and realism have lately become the de facto watchwords of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic," Carolyn Reynolds, of the Pandemic Action Network, and J. Stephen Morrison, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote in a [June article](#). "Pandemic fatigue has rapidly become entrenched in Washington and capitals around the world."

Reynolds and Morrison say there's a bright spot: G-20 countries, with the world's largest economies, [have agreed](#) to create a fund for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. But current commitments of about \$1 billion, including [\\$15 million](#) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, [fall \\$9 billion short](#) of the annual goal.

Speaking on the late June day the [World Bank approved](#) the pandemic fund, Gates noted few details have emerged about what specifically it will be used for. Conceivably, he said, part of the money could go toward creating a global team like GERM.

Others have proposed a similar idea. As Gates envisions it, GERM would consist of about 3,000 experts, managed by the World Health Organization, whose full-time job would be to watch out for disease outbreaks, quickly respond and stop them from turning into global catastrophes. He likens these experts to professional firefighters — constantly alert and ready to spring into action.

Such a team could have made a big difference with COVID, he said. "If there had been just a slightly quicker response, the number of countries affected would have been dramatically less."

Gates could arguably fund GERM in its entirety. But he doesn't intend to, apart from a small amount of startup money, because of what he sees as a question of legitimacy.

He said if the team is going to tell countries that their lack of pandemic preparation is putting the masses at risk, for example, the team must be funded primarily by governments — not philanthropy.

Scott Dowell, a Gates Foundation deputy director who has been overseeing much of the organization's pandemic preparedness work, elaborated: "What we don't want to do is have people think: 'Oh, this is something that the Gates Foundation is going to fund, or that is going to be imposed from Seattle.'"

Gates, whose [\\$50 billion foundation](#) of nearly 1,800 employees has promoted agendas on everything from education to family planning to disease eradication, has long been praised and criticized for his impact on the world. The criticism has morphed into [wild conspiracy theories](#) during the pandemic: one is that Gates is plotting to control the global health system; another, that he is surveilling people with microchips in vaccines. (He has also been criticized for his long relationship with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.)

“I’ve decided that the best way forward is to just keep doing the work,” Gates writes in his book.

Accordingly, the foundation is moving ahead in its effort to get GERM off the ground.

Dowell said he and Valerie Nkamgang Bemo, another foundation deputy director, have spent the past six months in a “listening phase.”

Some of the global public health leaders they’ve talked to have said, “That’s nuts, that can’t possibly work that way,” Dowell recalled.

Some like the idea of a professional force based within their country that coordinates with professional responders and international authorities, Dowell said, but bristled at the prospect of a group of outsiders “sweeping in and taking over our country’s public health response.”

The team would be largely decentralized, with staffers around the world, but Gates noted that some poor countries, like Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have limited disease-fighting capacity, so “you’re going to have to be able to fly in.”

The foundation, helped by a small group of outside leaders at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among other organizations, is now moving into a “design phase” to flesh out a detailed plan and get more feedback, Dowell said.

If things stay on track, he added, they might be able to get the team funded in a dozen or so countries by fall.

“I don’t know that we’ll hit that deadline,” Gates said, however. “You know, without the Ukraine war, maybe we would.”

Drug libraries and universal vaccines

Aside from the annual \$1 billion for GERM, a huge amount of funding would be needed to carry out Gates’ scientific research and development wish list.

He lays out a host of possibilities in his book. Among them: fostering innovative ways to rapidly test massive numbers of people, creating “libraries” of drug compounds that can be quickly scanned to see if they’re effective against new viruses, and developing “universal” vaccines that prime the body to fight viruses that don’t yet exist.

As with GERM, Gates said he believes the funding will eventually materialize, pandemic fatigue or otherwise.

“People were probably fatigued with World War II,” he said, but it’s a government’s job to protect its citizens.

Pandemic prevention is not foreign aid, he stressed, and is in the self-interest of all countries. Plus, he said, the National Institutes of Health is sure to fund some of the research — as are China, Japan and various European countries.

An ardent believer in industry whose foundation [opposed waiving COVID vaccine patent](#) protections before shifting course, Gates said the market potential for vaccines will also stimulate private investment. Some of the scientific research on Gates’ wish list could happen in Seattle, which is home to a wealth of infectious disease experts.

Gates mentioned Dr. Christopher Murray, head of the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, whose COVID forecasting models are widely cited nationwide; computational biologist [Trevor Bedford](#) of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, whose work on the Seattle Flu

	<p>Study helped track the progress of COVID; and the International Program in Public Health Leadership, a UW program bringing together public health leaders in Africa.</p> <p>The Seattle-based global health nonprofit PATH also played a crucial role in changing the direction of the Gates Foundation in the 1990s, he recalled. At a meeting convened by PATH, Gates first learned that improved health led people to have fewer children. Focused largely on reproductive health at the time, the foundation turned to working on eradicating diseases.</p> <p>The foundation's COVID work has taken it in a new direction; until the pandemic its disease work focused on those that afflict poor countries without lucrative vaccine and treatment markets. The foundation has contributed more than \$2 billion so far to its pandemic response, and more is coming. Citing COVID and other crises, the foundation this week announced it is increasing its payout by 50%, to \$9 billion annually.</p> <p>Looking ahead, Gates warns in his book, "We have to be careful not to get caught fighting the last war."</p> <p>He said the next pandemic could come from anywhere, though he speculates Africa is a contender because climate change and population growth may thrust humans and animals together in a way that gives rise to disease. While COVID is most dangerous for older people, a new pandemic could disproportionately affect the young — and who's to say what the fatality rate will be.</p> <p>"Whenever something emerges, it can be far worse than what we went through this time," Gates said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/15 Airlines pull back from smaller cities
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dubuque-toledo-islip-ithaca-smaller-cities-set-to-lose-service-as-airlines-pull-back/
GIST	<p>What do Toledo, Ohio, Dubuque, Iowa, and New York's Ithaca and Islip have in common? By September, each of these cities will lose some - if not all - of their air service from United, Delta or American Airlines.</p> <p>Pilot shortages, the rise in fuel prices, a new contract with the pilots who are still flying and inflation have all created a perfect storm for airlines and travelers.</p> <p>Some airlines, like American, parked 100 of their jets a few weeks ago and had to admit they simply didn't have the pilots to fly the planes. And with rising fuel costs and pilot salaries, the planes themselves — 50-seat regional jets — are no longer profitable to fly. Given current costs, these planes would have to fly at about 90% load factors to make a small profit. And those numbers just don't add up for the airlines.</p> <p>American Airlines announced it was ending service entirely to cities like Dubuque, Ithaca and Islip. Toledo won't have any flights from United, Delta or American come September.</p> <p>With American dropping out of Dubuque, that city is also losing its only airline.</p> <p>"We are incredibly disappointed to learn of American Airlines' decision to depart Dubuque," Molly Grover, president and CEO of the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce said in a release. "Unfortunately, this is the current trend in the aviation industry and regional airports are taking the brunt of the impact."</p> <p>Residents of cities like Toledo will need to drive about an hour to get to the nearest major airport — Detroit — and will incur the additional expense of driving, parking, and with less competition in the market, inevitably higher fares. And for those leisure travelers who would normally fly to Toledo, it may mean not going at all.</p> <p>For business travelers, the fallout may be more severe. For a manufacturer in one of these cities, making sales calls to sell a product just got harder and more expensive. People who would otherwise come to that manufacturer to do business may choose to meet with companies that are more accessible instead. As air</p>

service is crucial to business and commerce, and without it, many businesses in these cities with no air service might move, or fail.

In the last three years, starting shortly before the pandemic, 42 markets in the U.S. have lost between one-third and half their air service. And every indication points to more airports on the list to be reduced or cut by the major airlines.

In the short term, the economics of flying regional jets have changed dramatically. If rising fuel and crew costs force an airline to raise fares to stratospheric levels but they still can't make a profit, the efficiency and cost savings that justified buying the plane in the first place no longer work.

And with the pilot shortage continuing, other cities could lose air service before the end of this year - like Quincy and Moline in Illinois, many small cities in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Eureka and Chico in California and small regional airports in Arkansas and Alabama.

In the meantime, many U.S. cities are being served by airlines under a federally subsidized program called EAS - Essential Air Services - which guarantees that small U.S. communities receive a minimal level of scheduled air service. The program includes 60 communities in Alaska and 115 in the continental U.S., such as Muscle Shoals, Alabama to Devil's Lake, North Dakota, Johnstown, Pennsylvania to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. But airlines have to be willing to bid to operate the subsidized service, and the number of those interested airlines is declining - as is the frequency and level of service the airlines are able to provide in the markets they're already serving.

As more cities lose service, expect more air travelers to take the road instead, and carpool when possible. More people will be driving to airports as far as 200 miles away to catch their flight and paying higher airfares.

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HEADLINE	07/14 How likely reinfection by BA.5 spread?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/experts-reveal-reinfection-covid-spread-omicron-subvariant-ba5/story?id=86598514
GIST	<p>Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevailing theory was that if someone was infected with the virus, they were immune -- at least for a while.</p> <p>But a growing number of Americans seem to be contracting the virus more than once.</p> <p>A recent ABC News analysis of state data found that, as of June 8, there have been more than 1.6 million reinfections across 24 states, but experts say the number is likely much higher.</p> <p>"These are not the real numbers because many people are not reporting cases," Dr. Ali Mokdad, an epidemiologist with the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle, told ABC News.</p> <p>The latest variant, BA.5, has become the dominant strain in the U.S., making up more than 65% of all COVID-19 cases as of Wednesday, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>What's more, studies have suggested that vaccines and previous infection do not offer as much protection against BA.5 compared to past variants.</p> <p>However, there is little evidence to suggest that BA.5 causes more serious disease or is more deadly than previous variants.</p> <p>Experts say the risk of reinfection has also increased due to the sheer number of Americans who've had a first infection and the dropping of mitigation measures, like mask-wearing, across the country.</p>

Risk of reinfection was different pre-omicron

Before the omicron variant arrived in the U.S., experts said reinfection was far less likely.

"I would say that before the omicron variant, it was pretty rare for me to see reinfection," Dr. Shira Doron, an infectious disease physician and hospital epidemiologist at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, told ABC News. "Sometimes we would see someone who appeared to have reinfection and we'd repeat the test and it turned out that the new test was a false positive.

"And PCR tests can stay positive for months so sometimes clinicians would say a patient had reinfection, but it was a persistent positive from their infection a few months earlier," Doron said.

In fact, an April 2021 study from England published in [The Lancet](#) found that people with a previous history of COVID-19 infection were 84% less likely to be reinfected.

But that changed post-omicron. A March 2022 [study from South Africa](#) found an increased risk of reinfection with the emergence of omicron, BA.1, due to the variant's "marked ability to evade immunity from prior infection."

This has also rung true for the original omicron variant's several offshoots, including BA.5.

"There are two things going for BA.5," Mokdad said. "One is, it evades protection from vaccines and previous infection due to its mutation and it's a super-spreader."

"When you look at BA.5 specifically, your antibodies from BA.1 and BA.2 are not great at neutralizing BA.5," Doron added.

However, she did point to a [preprint study](#) from researchers in Qatar, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, suggesting effectiveness from infection with pre-omicron strains was only about 15.1-28.3% effective against reinfection with omicron.

"I still believe from what I've seen that if you were infected with omicron -- sure, you can get reinfected -- but it's much less likely you will" than if you were previously infected with delta, Doron said.

More people infected means higher chance of reinfection

Experts told ABC News the risk of reinfection hasn't just risen because of the emergence of the BA.5 variant. It's also because the total number of overall infections has increased.

In April, a [CDC analysis](#) estimated 58% of all Americans had antibodies indicating a prior COVID infection, meaning people never sickened by the virus are in the minority.

Doron said that by the nature of more people infected, especially two-and-a-half years into the pandemic, it means there will be more reinfections as well.

"In the pre-omicron era, the proportion of people who were infected is smaller than the proportion today, which is the majority of people," Doron said. "As you increase the proportion of people who have been infected, you're going to -- by definition -- increase the proportion of reinfections."

People have changed their behaviors

Mokdad said another reason that the risk of reinfection is higher is because people's behaviors have changed.

He said after the initial omicron wave in winter 2021-22, most Americans stopped wearing masks indoors and all states lifted their remaining mitigation measures.

	<p>The IHME, where Mokdad works, has tracked mask use over time and as of May 30, 2022 -- the latest date for which data is available -- found that just 18% of Americans say they always wear a mask in public. At the same time one year ago, that figure was 44%.</p> <p>"Mask-wearing is the lowest since we started tracking it," he said. "Even on planes, people don't wear them. And now you have an invasive and an immune-escape variant and people not wearing a mask indoors."</p> <p>He said previous waves from different COVID strains -- including alpha, delta and the original omicron variant -- were likely mitigated due to a higher percentage of the public wearing masks in indoor spaces.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Climate activists escalate tactics
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-climate-activists-aim-stir-friction-blockades-86864779
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- "It's absolutely crazy to stick yourself to the road with superglue," admits Lina Schinkoethe.</p> <p>And yet, the 19-year-old recently landed in jail for doing just that, in protest at what she believes is the German government's failure to act against climate change.</p> <p>Schinkoethe is part of a group called Uprising of the Last Generation that claims the world has only a few years left to turn the wheel around and avoid catastrophic levels of global warming.</p> <p>Like-minded activists elsewhere in Europe have interrupted major sporting events such as the Tour de France and the Formula One Grand Prix in Silverstone in recent weeks, while others glued themselves to the frame of a painting at London's Royal Academy of Arts Tuesday. But Schinkoethe's group has mainly targeted ordinary commuters in cities such as Berlin who, on any given day this summer, might find themselves in an hours-long tailback caused by a handful of activists gluing themselves to the asphalt.</p> <p>Their actions have prompted outrage and threats from inconvenienced motorists. Tabloid media and some politicians have accused them of sowing chaos and harming ordinary folk just trying to go about their business. Some have branded them dangerous radicals.</p> <p>Schinkoethe says the escalation in tactics is justified.</p> <p>"If we wanted people to like us then we'd do something else but we've tried everything else," she told The Associated Press. "We've asked nicely. We've demonstrated calmly."</p> <p>She recalls joining the Fridays for Future protests led by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg which saw hundreds of thousands of students worldwide skip school and rally for a better world.</p> <p>"I really hoped something would change, that politicians would react and finally take us and the science of climate change seriously," she said. "But we're still heading for a world that's 3 to 4 degrees Celsius (5.4 to 7.2 Fahrenheit) warmer."</p> <p>Such a rise in global temperatures is more than twice the 1.5-C (2.7-F) limit countries agreed to in the 2015 Paris climate accord. While progress has been made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, experts agree the goal is still far out of reach.</p> <p>Scientists agree that the world has no time to waste in cutting emissions, but have tried to counter 'doomism' by arguing that the world isn't heading for one single cliff edge so much as a long, steep slope with several precipitous drops.</p> <p>"Each tenth of a degree matters," said Ricarda Winkelmann, a scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research near Berlin.</p>

“If we really start acting now and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, chances are that we can limit some of the most severe climate impacts,” she said.

Such messages are lost on many of those caught up in the blockades.

At two protests witnessed by The AP in June and July, several truckers got out of their cabs to berate the activists. One physically hauled two protesters off the road.

Other drivers, some of whom weren't affected by the blockade, also hurled abuse at the activists. A few expressed support for the climate cause but questioned the way the protests were conducted.

“They need to find a different way to do this than to block other people,” said one driver on his way to work, who would only give his name as Stefan.

Berlin's mayor has called the street blockades “crimes,” while the city's top security official is demanding that prosecutors and courts mete out swift convictions. So far, no cases have gone to trial.

Still, Schinkoethe believes she has no choice but to keep going.

“We need to generate friction, peaceful friction, so that there’s an honest debate and we can act accordingly,” she said.

That sentiment was echoed by Ernst Hoermann, a retired railway engineer and grandfather of eight who has been traveling to Berlin from Bavaria regularly to take part in the protests.

“We basically have to cause a nuisance until it hurts,” he said as a police officer tried to unstick him from the road with the help of cooking oil.

Similar protests have resulted in weeks-long prison sentences in Britain, where the government has sought court injunctions to preemptively stop road blockades by the group Insulate Britain.

Hoermann, 72, said he isn't afraid of fines or the prospect of prison.

“Not compared to the fear I have for my children,” he said.

Last Generation has recently tried to focus attention on Germany's plans to drill for oil and gas in the North Sea.

Despite having the most ambitious climate target of any major industrialized nation, Germany's center-left government is scrambling like other European countries to replace its Russian energy imports and avoid painful fuel shortages in the coming years.

Schinkoethe says the number of people participating in the group’s actions has grown from 30 to 200 in six months, and argues that the blockades follow the tradition of civil disobedience seen during the U.S. civil rights movement and the fight for women's suffrage.

“What we’re doing is illegal,” she said. “At the same time it’s legitimate.”

Manuel Ostermann, a senior member of one of Germany’s police unions, accused the group of committing crimes while portraying themselves as victims.

“Where the process of radicalization gets going, extremism isn’t far off,” he wrote on Twitter.

Members of Last Generation have tried to counter that, citing U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who earlier this year said that “the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels.”

	"I'm going to keep going until the government locks me and the other activists up for their peaceful protests, or gives in to our demands," said Schinkoethe.
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HEADLINE	07/14 Philippines ends stay foreign peacekeepers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/philippines-ends-stay-foreign-peacekeepers-south-86867010
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines -- Foreign peacekeepers credited with helping ease years of bloody fighting between government forces and Muslim rebels have left the southern Philippines after officials decided to end their presence, but talks are underway to allow their possible return, officials and the rebels said Friday.</p> <p>Members of the Malaysia-led International Monitoring Team, or IMT, flew out of the southern region of Mindanao on June 30 after their authority to stay as ceasefire monitors, which must be renewed each year, was not extended by the then-outgoing administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.</p> <p>It remains to be seen whether new President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will authorize the return of the peacekeepers. Decades-long Muslim and communist insurgencies are among major problems he inherited after taking office on June 30 following a landslide victory.</p> <p>Deployed in 2004, the IMT initially consisted of armed peacekeeping forces from Malaysia, Brunei and Libya to help monitor the enforcement of a cease-fire agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the largest Muslim rebel group in the south, which signed a Malaysian-brokered peace deal with the government in 2014.</p> <p>The European Union, Japan, Norway and Indonesia later sent either armed troops or civilian experts to join the IMT, which also helped monitor humanitarian issues and efforts to rehabilitate war-battered communities. As fighting subsided considerably through the years, the 60-member IMT was gradually reduced. The last contingent of more than 20 peacekeepers left the south two weeks ago.</p> <p>In March, a Philippine government peace panel told the head of the foreign peacekeeping force, Maj. Gen. Datuk Hamdan Ismail of Malaysia, that it no longer intends to extend the mandate of the IMT, two officials told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.</p> <p>With "practically zero skirmishes" between government forces and Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels in recent years, "the exercise of the roles and responsibilities of the IMT has been substantially diminished," the government panel told Hamdan in a letter, a copy of which was seen by the AP.</p> <p>In the past, deadly clashes wrought extensive damage to entire towns in the south and displaced tens of thousands of people.</p> <p>The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila notified the countries involved in the peacekeeping force in May of the government's decision "to no longer renew the mandate of the IMT" after June 30 "in view of significant accomplishments in the peace process." It cited the enforcement of peace agreements, including the establishment of a new Muslim autonomous region, which is now being administered by former Muslim rebel commanders under a transition period.</p> <p>"All the privileges and immunities granted to members of the IMT, including authority to stay based on currently valid visas and authority to bear firearms shall likewise cease," the Department of Foreign Affairs told the countries in separate diplomatic notes, a copy of which was seen by the AP.</p> <p>Philippine officials thanked Malaysia, Brunei, the EU and former member countries in the IMT for their help in restoring peace and fostering economic development in the south, home to the country's Muslim minority in the largely Roman Catholic nation.</p>

	<p>The rebels, however, objected to the government panel's decision and said that based on signed agreements, IMT forces should stay to safeguard the ceasefire agreement in the southern Philippines until "the full decommissioning" — a euphemism for the disarming and return to normal life — of all the 40,000 combatants of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the two officials said.</p> <p>More than 12,000 Muslim rebels have been "decommissioned" and laid down about 2,000 firearms and other weapons so far. A new group of 14,000 rebels was undergoing the process when Duterte's term ended on June 30 and Marcos Jr. took office. The rest have not been disarmed.</p> <p>"The agreement is for the IMT contingent to stay here until the last MILF combatant is decommissioned or until the exit agreement is signed," rebel peace panel chairman Mohagher Iqbal said, adding that the government and the rebels should jointly decide on the peacekeepers' presence and their terms of stay.</p> <p>Philippine officials have expressed openness to inviting the peacekeepers back but the government and the rebels have yet to finalize the details of any such agreement, Iqbal said. He expressed optimism that the issue would be resolved given the success the peace talks have reaped so far.</p> <p>"The parties must subscribe to the agreements to be able to succeed," Iqbal said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Officers killed by gun violence on rise
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/officers-killed-gun-violence-2022-number-officers-killed/story?id=86813964
GIST	<p>The number of police officers who died in the line of duty decreased by over 30% over the first six months of this year compared to 2021, but the number of officers killed by gun deaths increased by nearly 20%, according to a new report released Thursday by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.</p> <p>The numbers, part of the organization's mid-year report on all officer fatalities, found that, so far this year, 129 federal state, tribal and local officers died in the line of duty, compared to 188 over the same time period last year.</p> <p>The organization says the decrease is almost entirely due to a reduction in COVID-19 deaths but the virus continues to be the biggest killer of law enforcement in 2022, with 54 officers losing their lives because of it, compared to 98 at the same time last year.</p> <p>Thirty-three officers died from gun deaths in 2022 compared to 28 during the previous year at the same time.</p> <p>Sgt. Joshua Caudell, a K-9 officer with the Arkansas Department of Corrections was one of the officers shot and killed.</p> <p>The family of the nine-year police officer called his death "devastating" according to local reports.</p> <p>NLEOMF says the most of the gun-related deaths were carried out with handguns, and involved domestic disturbances. The month of June saw most gun violence with 12 officer deaths.</p> <p>Traffic deaths, the group said, are also down 9%, while automobile crashes are up.</p> <p>"Of the 31 traffic-related fatalities, 19 were automobile crashes and 1 was a motorcycle crash," the report says. "During the same time period last year, 13 officers were killed in automobile crashes and three died in motorcycle crashes.</p> <p>The 20 total crashes over the first six months of 2022 represent a 25% increase compared to 16 in the same time period in 2021."</p>

	The report found that 53 were city officers, 41 were from sheriff's offices and 19 were from state police agencies.
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HEADLINE	07/14 Men's health worse in US than abroad
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/mens-health-worse-us-study/story?id=86836409
GIST	<p>American men are sicker and die earlier than men living in other developed nations, according to a new report from The Commonwealth Fund, a non-profit organization focusing on public health issues.</p> <p>The study looked at men from the U.S, Switzerland, Norway, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, the U.K., France, the Netherlands, Canada and Sweden and found that rates of avoidable deaths, chronic conditions and mental health needs are among the highest with American men.</p> <p>Around 29% of American men reported they have multiple chronic illnesses, followed closely by Australian men at 25%, according to the study. Men living in France and Norway were the lowest at 17%.</p> <p>"Whether it's stubbornness, an aversion to appearing weak or vulnerable, or other reasons, men go to the doctor far less than women do," the study's authors wrote.</p> <p>Men in the U.S. also die from avoidable deaths, classified as deaths before 75 years old, at a higher rate than men from the 10 other countries listed in the report.</p> <p>The study showed that income disparities also play a factor in one's health. Men with lower incomes tend to partake in unhealthy habits more frequently, such as drinking and smoking, leading to chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.</p> <p>Low-income earners are least likely to afford adequate care and can't visit the doctor regularly, which contributes to worsening health issues, the study added. Men stressed because they are low-income earners were less likely to have a regular doctor.</p> <p>The U.S. remains an outlier being the only industrialized nation without universal healthcare and has led to men avoiding getting the care they need because costs are too high, researchers noted.</p> <p>"Roughly 16 million U.S. men are without health insurance and affordability is the reason that people most often cite for why they do not enroll in a health plan," they wrote.</p> <p>American men also don't think highly of the U.S. health care system, with only 37% giving it a high rating. It's even worse among men with a below-average income, with only 32% approving the healthcare system.</p> <p>There was a silver lining among men in the U.S. They have the lowest rate of prostate cancer-related deaths among the other countries studied, largely because the U.S. offers wide-ranging cancer testing and advanced treatments, the authors of the study said.</p> <p>ABC News reached out to the authors of the study for comment but have not heard back.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Recall: Ford SUVs, trucks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/ford-recalling-100k-suvs-trucks-due-fire-risks/story?id=86836100
GIST	<p>Car manufacturer Ford is recalling over 100,000 SUVs and trucks because of fire risks in the engine, nearly a month after recalling millions of its vehicles.</p> <p>The company is recalling some of its 2020-2022 Ford Escapes, 2021-2022 Lincoln Corsairs and 2022 Mavericks equipped with 2.5-liter hybrid or plug-in hybrid powertrains, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.</p>

	<p>If engine failure occurs, engine oil and fuel vapor could be released into the chamber where the engine is stored and collected around ignition sources such as the engine and exhaust components.</p> <p>People who own any of the vehicles affected should park and turn off the engines “as quickly as possible” when they hear “unexpected engine noises, notice a reduction in vehicle power, or see smoke,” NHTSA said.</p> <p>There have been no reported injuries, Ford said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Sri Lanka president resigns amid unrest
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sri-lankan-president-resigns-parliament-convene-86862830
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- The speaker of Sri Lanka’s Parliament said Friday that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has resigned and lawmakers will convene to choose a new leader after massive protests over the country's economic collapse forced him from office.</p> <p>Parliament will meet Saturday to start the process of electing a new president who would serve out the remainder of Rajapaksa's term ending in 2024, said Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana. He expects the process to be done in seven days.</p> <p>That person could potentially appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament. With Rajapaksa done, pressure on the current prime minister and acting president, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to step down was rising.</p> <p>Sri Lanka has run short of money to pay for imports of basic necessities such as food, fertilizer, medicine and fuel, to the despair of its 22 million people. Its rapid economic decline has been all the more shocking because, before this crisis, the economy had been expanding, with a growing, comfortable middle class.</p> <p>Rajapaksa fled the country Wednesday amid the mounting protests. He arrived in Singapore on Thursday and the speaker said Rajapaksa's resignation was effective on that date.</p> <p>People who were gathering Friday at the main protest site in front of the president’s office in Colombo welcomed the news of Rajapaksa's resignation but insisted that Wickremesinghe also should step aside.</p> <p>“I am happy that Gotabaya has finally left. He should have resigned earlier, without causing much problems,” Velaunatha Pillai, 73, a retired bank employee, said as patriotic songs were blaring from loudspeakers.</p> <p>But he added that “Ranil is a supporter of Gotabaya and other Rajapaksas. He was helping them. He also must go.”</p> <p>Protesters who had occupied government buildings retreated Thursday, restoring a tenuous calm in the capital, Colombo. But with the political opposition in Parliament fractured, a solution to Sri Lanka’s many woes seemed no closer.</p> <p>The nation is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund and other creditors, but its finances are so poor that even obtaining a bailout has proven difficult, Wickremesinghe recently said.</p> <p>The country remains a powder keg, and the military warned Thursday that it had powers to respond in case of chaos — a message some found concerning.</p> <p>Abeywardana promised a swift and transparent process for electing a new president.</p>

"I request the honorable and loving citizens of this country to create a peaceful atmosphere in order to implement the proper Parliamentary democratic process and enable all members of Parliament to participate in the meetings and function freely and conscientiously," he said Friday.

The protesters accuse Rajapaksa and his powerful political family of siphoning money from government coffers for years and of hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy. The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged that some of his policies contributed to Sri Lanka's meltdown.

Maduka Iroshan, 26, a university student and protester, said he was "thrilled" that Rajapaksa had quit, because he "ruined the dreams of the young generation."

Months of protests reached a frenzied peak over the weekend when demonstrators stormed the president's home and office and Wickremesinghe's official residence. On Wednesday, they seized his office.

Images of protesters inside the buildings — lounging on elegant sofas and beds, posing at officials' desks and touring the opulent settings — captured the world's attention.

The demonstrators initially vowed to stay until a new government was in place, but they shifted tactics Thursday, apparently concerned that an escalation in violence could undermine their message following clashes outside the Parliament that left dozens injured.

"The fear was that there could be a crack in the trust they held for the struggle," said Nuzly, a protest leader who goes by only one name. "We've shown what power of the people can do, but it doesn't mean we have to occupy these places."

Closing the gate to the presidential palace after the crowds cleared out was bittersweet, said Visaka Jayaweera, a performing artist.

"Taking over his residence was a great moment. It showed just how much we wanted him to step down. But it is also a great relief" to leave, she said. "We were worried if people would act out — many were angry to see the luxury he had been living in when they were outside, struggling to buy milk for their children."

Rajapaksa and his wife slipped away in the night aboard a military plane early Wednesday. On Thursday, he went to Singapore, according to the city-state's Foreign Ministry. It said he had not requested asylum.

Since Sri Lankan presidents are protected from arrest while in power, Rajapaksa likely wanted to leave while he still had constitutional immunity and access to the plane.

The protests underscored the dramatic fall of the Rajapaksa political clan that has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

A military strategist whose brutal campaign helped end the country's 26-year civil war, Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, who was president at the time, were hailed by the island's Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Despite accusations of wartime atrocities, including ordering military attacks on ethnic Tamil civilians and abducting journalists, Rajapaksa remained popular among many Sri Lankans. He has continually denied the allegations.

It was not immediately clear if Singapore would be Rajapaksa's final destination, but he has previously sought medical care there, including undergoing heart surgery.

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HEADLINE	07/14 WHO: 25M kids missed routine vaccinations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/25-million-kids-missed-routine-vaccinations-covid-86852559

GIST	<p>GENEVA -- About 25 million children worldwide have missed out on routine immunizations against common diseases like diphtheria, largely because the coronavirus pandemic disrupted regular health services or triggered misinformation about vaccines, according to the U.N.</p> <p>In a new report published Friday, the World Health Organization and UNICEF said their figures show 25 million children last year failed to get vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, a marker for childhood immunization coverage, continuing a downward trend that began in 2019.</p> <p>“This is a red alert for child health,” said Catherine Russell, UNICEF’s Executive Director.</p> <p>“We are witnessing the largest sustained drop in childhood immunization in a generation,” she said, adding that the consequences would be measured in lives lost.</p> <p>Data showed the vast majority of the children who failed to get immunized were living in developing countries, namely Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Philippines. While vaccine coverage fell in every world region, the worst effects were seen in East Asia and the Pacific.</p> <p>Experts said this “historic backsliding” in vaccination coverage was especially disturbing since it was occurring as rates of severe malnutrition were rising. Malnourished children typically have weaker immune systems and infections like measles can often prove fatal to them.</p> <p>“The convergence of a hunger crisis with a growing immunization gap threatens to create the conditions for a child survival crisis,” the U.N. said.</p> <p>Scientists said low vaccine coverage rates had already resulted in preventable outbreaks of diseases like measles and polio. In March 2020, WHO and partners asked countries to suspend their polio eradication efforts amid the accelerating COVID-19 pandemic. There have since been dozens of polio epidemics in more than 30 countries.</p> <p>“This is particularly tragic as tremendous progress was made in the two decades before the COVID pandemic to improve childhood vaccination rates globally,” said Helen Bedford, a professor of children’s health at University College London, who was not connected to the U.N. report. She said the news was shocking but not surprising, noting that immunization services are frequently an “early casualty” of major social or economic disasters.</p> <p>Dr. David Elliman, a consultant pediatrician at Britain’s Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, said it was critical to reverse the declining vaccination trend among children.</p> <p>“The effects of what happens in one part of the world can ripple out to affect the whole globe,” he said in a statement, noting the rapid spread of COVID-19 and more recently, monkeypox. “Whether we act on the basis of ethics or ‘enlightened self interest’, we must put (children) top of our list of priorities.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/13 Hezbollah threatens Israel w/escalation
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-israel-lebanon-beirut-3b7195a264601528c8e46184fe848e03
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of Lebanon’s militant Hezbollah group threatened Israel with military escalation Wednesday if a future deal over the disputed maritime border between the two countries is not in Lebanon’s favor.</p> <p>Sayyed Hassan Narallah said in a televised speech that Lebanon should be able to extract oil and gas in Lebanese waters. He warned that sending unarmed drones over the Karish gas field in the Mediterranean earlier this month was “a modest beginning to where the situation could be heading.”</p>

On July 2, the Israeli military said it shot down three drones before Hezbollah issued a statement saying they were unarmed and were sent on a reconnaissance mission. “The mission was accomplished and the message was received,” a Hezbollah statement said at the time.

Israel and Hezbollah are bitter enemies that fought a monthlong war in the summer of 2006. Israel considers the Iranian-backed Lebanese group its most serious immediate threat, estimating it has some 150,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel.

“The message of the drones meant that we are serious and we are not after a psychological war but we are gradually moving in our steps,” Nasrallah said, adding that Lebanese officials should take advantage of his group’s strength to use it in indirect talks.

Nasrallah added that “whatever we are supposed to do, we will without any hesitation. This message was understood by the Israelis and by the Americans.”

Nasrallah’s refused to comment on the Lebanese caretaker prime minister’s criticism of Hezbollah for sending the drones. Najib Mikati said at the time it was an unnecessarily risky action.

“Whether our message was understood in Lebanon or not, we don’t care about that. What is important for us is that the enemy gets the message,” he said.

The incident in the Karish gas field took place soon after U.S. mediator Amos Hochstein visited Lebanese and Israeli officials, as talks were advancing.

Nasrallah’s comments came hours after President Joe Biden arrived in Israel at the start of his first visit to the Middle East as president.

Lebanon claims the Karish gas field is disputed territory under ongoing maritime border negotiations, whereas Israel says it lies within its internationally recognized economic waters.

Negotiations between Lebanon and Israel to determine their maritime borders commenced in October 2020, when the two sides held indirect U.S.-mediated talks in southern Lebanon. Since taking over the mediation from late 2021, Hochstein has resorted to shuttle diplomacy with visits to both Beirut and Jerusalem.

Nasrallah said it was the first time that Hezbollah sent three drones at the same time adding that when the Israeli forces opened fire near Karish it was a message to engineers at the facility that this is not a safe area.

Nasrallah said that besides the drones, Hezbollah has other capabilities in the air and by sea and “all the options are on the table.”

“If we go to war, we might impose our conditions on the enemy,” Nasrallah said, adding that if the Americans “don’t give us our rights that are demanded by the state and if you don’t allow companies to extract (oil) God knows what we will do. We will turn over the table in the face of the world.”

Israel and Lebanon, which have been officially at war since Israel’s creation in 1948, both claim some 860 square kilometers (330 square miles) of the Mediterranean Sea. Lebanon hopes to exploit offshore gas reserves as it grapples with the worst economic crisis in its modern history.

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SOURCE	https://therecord.media/chinese-hackers-targeted-us-reporters-before-capitol-attack-and-russian-invasion-report-finds/
GIST	<p>Chinese-aligned hackers targeted White House correspondents and other U.S. political reporters in the run-up to the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to a new report from cybersecurity firm Proofpoint.</p> <p>The report highlights the cybersecurity risks facing journalists and other members of the news media, who have long been attractive targets for cyberspies.</p> <p>The threat actor Proofpoint tracks as TA412 carried out a series of phishing attempts targeting U.S.-based journalists since early 2021, according to the report. Researchers believe the attackers are aligned with Chinese government interests. In 2020, Microsoft reported the threat actor, which it dubbed Zirconium, had targeted those connected to the U.S. presidential campaign as well as at think tanks that focused on international relations.</p> <p>The findings aren't the first time China has been linked to attacks on U.S. news media. Suspected Chinese-state affiliated hackers previously breached the networks of The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and other outlets. Journalists are often targeted because they handle sensitive information before it becomes public, and their reporting requires maintaining source networks across government and the private sector.</p> <p>Access to journalists' email, or social media accounts themselves, can also be a valuable tool beyond the information they contain.</p> <p>"A compromised account could be used to spread disinformation or pro-state propaganda, provide disinformation during times of war or pandemic, or be used to influence a politically charged atmosphere," the report noted.</p> <p>One pivot, then another</p> <p>The attacks by TA412 involved sending messages with invisible embedded images, also known as web beacons or tracking pixels, to gain potential insight into targets and their networks.</p> <p>Between January and February of 2021, Proofpoint identified five campaigns from TA412. The company also observed TA412 pivot in the days leading up to the Capitol attack, focusing on White House correspondents and other Washington, DC-based reporters. Malicious emails sent to targets during that time used subject lines "pulled from recent US news articles," per the report.</p> <p>The group was active again in August 2021, this time targeting journalists who work on cybersecurity and surveillance issues.</p> <p>"Those targeted appeared to have written extensively on social media privacy issues and Chinese disinformation campaigns, signaling an interest by the Chinese state in media narratives that could push a negative global opinion or perception of China," according to the report.</p> <p>After another lull, TA412 ramped up activities again on February 9, 2022 — switching gears to target those covering the anticipated Russian invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Subject lines from that campaign included, per Proofpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New bill aims to prohibit US military aid to Ukraine • US issues Russia threat to China • Macron reveals Putin 'guarantees' • UK to arm Ukraine with anti-ship missiles against Russia – Kiev's envoy • US says how Ukraine stand-off can be resolved • UK says invasion 'highly likely' • White House says door for diplomacy with Russia remains open, but troop buildup is continuing

	<p>Proofpoint reported that another Chinese advanced persistent threat group, TA459, targeted journalists with emails containing a malicious attachment that would infect their machines with the Chinoxy malware — allowing the attackers to gain backdoor access to victims’ systems. The same threat actor was previously observed using the same malware in Southeast Asia by researchers at Bitdefender.</p> <p>The Proofpoint report also outlined other cybersecurity incidents related to journalists involving sophisticated threat actors linked to Turkey, North Korea, and Iran.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Fewer fall victim to data breaches
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fewer-victim-data-breaches/
GIST	<p>The number of people falling victim to data breaches has fallen back from last year’s record high, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC), a US-based non-profit that provides identity crime advice.</p> <p>According to the H1 2022 Data Breach Analysis report, 2021 saw 1862 publicly reported breaches, with 851 in the first half of the year. This year saw H1 breaches drop back to 817 incidents.</p> <p>More significantly, the number of victims is down some 45% compared to the first half of 2021. Researchers suggest this is partially down a switch by criminal hackers away from individuals. Instead, they are targeting businesses through vectors including supply chain attacks and business email compromise. Criminal groups appear to be focusing on companies, government agencies and institutions.</p> <p>As many as 87% of data compromises so far this year resulted from cyber-attacks, according to ITRC. Phishing is the leading cause of compromise. In the second quarter of this year, 30 breaches, with just over 10 million victims, were down to system and human errors. The report attributes 10 breaches to misconfigured firewalls, nine to “correspondence,” and six to failures to configure cloud security.</p> <p>For the first time since 2018, researchers found a decline in ransomware incidents. Possible explanations include the war in Ukraine and “the collapse of cryptocurrencies favored by cyber-criminals.” Ransomware attacks fell 20% from the first to the second quarter this year.</p> <p>In the second quarter, phishing, smishing and business email compromise (BEC) accounted for 107 breaches, ransomware for 55 and 22 were attributed to malware. In total, these incidents accounted for 17.7 million victims.</p> <p>The ITRC cautions that the raw data might not give a complete picture of the number of people affected by cyber-attacks. As many as 40% of data breach notices did not state information such as the attack vector or a victim count. It is possible that the total number of victims is higher, and totals could change with “just a handful of large breaches or a series of smaller ones,” according to the ITRC.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Mantis botnet record DDoS attack in June
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/mantis-botnet-behind-the-record-breaking-ddos-attack-in-june/
GIST	<p>The record-breaking distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack that Cloudflare mitigated last month originated from a new botnet called Mantis, which is currently described as “the most powerful botnet to date.”</p> <p>The attack peaked at 26 million requests per second that came from 5,067 devices. The previous record was held by Mëris botnet, which launched an attack that spiked at 21.8 million requests per second.</p> <p>DDoS mitigation company Cloudflare, has been tracking Mantis botnet attacks against one thousands of its customers.</p>

Not your ordinary botnet

Cloudflare explains in a [report today](#) that its analysts named the botnet Mantis after the [Mantis Shrimp](#) that can deliver devastating blows with its claws while being roughly 10 cm (4 inches) long. Similarly, the botnet is extremely powerful despite relying on a small number of devices.

Typical botnets need to compromise a large number of connected devices to accumulate sufficient firepower to deliver disrupting attacks against protected targets.

Mantis targets focuses on servers and virtual machines, which come with significantly more resources.

Generating many HTTPS requests is a resource-demanding process, so the more powerful the devices that constitute the botnet swarm, the more potent the DDoS attacks they can launch.

The previous record holder, Mēris, achieved particularly strong attacks by recruiting MikroTik devices, which feature powerful hardware.

Mantis victims

Mantis targets entities in the IT and telecom (36%), news, media, and publications (15%), finance (10%), and gaming (12%) sectors. Over the past 30 days, Mantis launched 3,000 DDoS attacks against almost a thousand Cloudflare customers, the company notes.

Most of the targets are organizations in the United States (20%) and the Russian Federation (15%), while victims in Turkey, France, Poland, Ukraine, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, and Canada account for percentages between 2.5% and 5%.

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HEADLINE	07/14 NKorea HolyGhost ransomware operation
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-links-holy-ghost-ransomware-operation-to-north-korean-hackers/
GIST	<p>For more than a year, North Korean hackers have been running a ransomware operation called HolyGhost, attacking small businesses in various countries.</p> <p>The group has been active for quite a while but it failed to gain the notoriety and financial success of other gangs even if the operation followed the same recipe: double extortion combined with a leak site to publish the name of the victims and stolen data.</p> <p>Opportunistic attacks, small demands</p> <p>Researchers at Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) are tracking the Holy Ghost ransomware gang as DEV-0530. In a report earlier today, they say that the first payload from this threat actor was seen last year in June.</p> <p>Classified as SiennaPurple (BTLC_C.exe), the early Holy Ghost ransomware variant did not come with many features compared to the subsequent Go-based versions that emerged in October 2021.</p> <p>Microsoft tracks the newer variants as SiennaBlue (HolyRS.exe, HolyLocker.exe, and BTLC.exe) and notes that their functionality expanded over time to include multiple encryption options, string obfuscation, public key management, and internet/intranet support.</p> <p>The researchers say that DEV-0530 managed to compromise several targets, mainly small-to-midsize businesses. Among victims were banks, schools, manufacturing organizations, and event and meeting planning companies.</p> <p>“The victimology indicates that these victims are most likely targets of opportunity. MSTIC suspects that DEV-0530 might have exploited vulnerabilities such as CVE-2022-26352 (DotCMS remote code</p>

execution vulnerability) on public-facing web applications and content management systems to gain initial access into target networks” - [Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center](#)

Holy Ghost actors followed the pattern of a typical ransomware attack and stole data before deploying the encryption routine on infected systems.

The attacker left a ransom note on the compromised machine and they also emailed the victim with a link to a sample of stolen data to announce that they were willing to negotiate a ransom in exchange for the decryption key.

Usually, the actors demanded a small payout between 1.2 to 5 bitcoins, or up to about \$100,000 at the current exchange rate.

Even if the demands were not large, the attacker was willing to negotiate and sometimes lowered the price to less than a third of the initial demand, MSTIC says.

Link to North Korea

This detail, the infrequent rate of attacks, and the random selection of victims add to the theory that the Holy Ghost ransomware operation may not be controlled by the North Korean government.

Instead, hackers working for the Pyongyang regime may be doing this on their own, for personal financial gain.

The connection with state-backed hacker groups is present, though, as MSTIC found communication between email accounts belonging to Holy Ghost and the Andariel, a threat actor part of the Lazarus Group under North Korea's Reconnaissance General Bureau.

The link between the two groups is made stronger by the fact that both were “operating from the same infrastructure set, and even using custom malware controllers with similar names,” the researchers say.

Posing as do-gooders

Holy Ghost’s website is down at the moment but the attacker used the little visibility it had to pose as a legitimate entity trying to help victims improve their security posture.

Furthermore, they motivate their actions as an effort to “close the gap between the rich and poor” and to “help the poor and starving people.”

Like other actors in the ransomware business, Holy Ghost assures victims that they would not sell or leak the stolen data if they get paid.

Microsoft’s [report](#) includes a set of recommended actions to prevent infections with Holy Ghost payloads as well as some indicators of compromise discovered while investigating the malware.

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HEADLINE	07/14 New phishing kit hijacks WordPress sites
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/new-phishing-kit-hijacks-wordpress-sites-for-paypal-scam
GIST	<p>Researchers have discovered a new phishing kit that injects malware into legitimate WordPress sites and uses a fake PayPal-branded social engineering scam to trick targets into handing over their most sensitive data, including government documents, photos, and even banking information — under the guise of security controls.</p> <p>Akamai researchers said the attackers use a file management WordPress plug-in to deploy the phishing kit, which includes several checks on the connected IP addresses to evade detection of their known malicious domains. It also allows the threat actors to rewrite URLs without the .php at the end, making them look more like genuine addresses.</p>

	<p>Once up and running, the scam PayPal site asks victims to jump through a series of apparent security measures — even a CAPTCHA challenge — when the threat actors are simply grabbing the information for data and identity theft.</p> <p>"By using captcha immediately, telling the victim that there has been unusual account activity, and reinforcing 'trust' by utilizing 'new security measures' like proof of government identification, they are making the victim feel as if they are in a legitimate scenario," the Akamai team explains in their new report on the PayPal phishing kit. "The same methods that can ensure an identity is secure can ultimately lead to total identity theft — not just credit card numbers, but cryptocurrency accounts and anything else the threat actor wants to obtain."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Crypto crash headache for ransom gangs
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/is-cryptocurrency-s-crash-causing-headaches-for-ransomware-gangs-
GIST	<p>As the value of Bitcoin plunged in the last eight months, some security firms have observed an impact on ransomware activity.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the year, for example, ransomware attacks have dropped by about a quarter, according to cybersecurity firm Arctic Wolf. In another measure of the disruption, most of the fly-by-night cryptocurrency exchanges serving to launder ransoms have stopped advertising their services, suggesting that as cash-outs surged — essentially, creating a bank run — they could not satisfy demand, according to a new blog post from cyber-threat intelligence firm Cybersixgill.</p> <p>And according to new data released this week from the Identity Theft Resource Center, ransomware attacks leading to data breaches fell 20% in the second quarter of 2022 compared with the first quarter of this year, and have declined quarter over quarter.</p> <p>Most major ransomware groups cash out cryptocurrency quickly, but smaller players are more likely to hold onto their assets, leading to a panicked response, says Dov Lerner, security research lead at Cybersixgill.</p> <p>"I don't know how much reserves Binance or Coinbase might have, but these Dark Web exchanges, they certainly don't have millions of dollars in reserves," he says. "If everyone is dumping cryptocurrency for dollars, they can't keep up."</p> <p>The volatility in cryptocurrency markets has led to massive disruption among the nascent companies attempting to find their place in what had been a burgeoning marketplace. This week, cryptocurrency lending firm Celsius Network filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy after locking out customers from making withdrawals last month. Two other firms — crypto hedge fund Three Arrows Capital and Voyager Digital — have both declared bankruptcy in the past two weeks. The whereabouts of the two founders of Three Arrows Capital are currently unknown.</p> <p>Behind the financial culling is a 71% drop in the value of Bitcoin — and similar drops in other cryptocurrencies — since November 2021.</p> <p>Dark Web Shaken by Crypto's Decline</p> <p>The underground market has fared no better. In an analysis of 34 Dark Web cryptocurrency exchanges, which typically charge high fees of 2% to 15% of transactions for anonymity, Cybersixgill found that every one of them no longer advertises any capability to exchange cryptocurrencies for cash.</p> <p>Yet cybercriminals are typically agnostic to fluctuations in cryptocurrency. They typically sell services and tools in US dollars, and they research business victims' revenues before making a ransom demand in dollars or euros.</p>

"If the value of Bitcoin declines, ransomware attackers will simply ask for more Bitcoin," says Jackie Koven, head of threat intelligence at cryptocurrency-monitoring firm Chainalysis. "They generally cash out ransom payments quickly and do not hold them in crypto as investments."

The shake-up in Dark Web cryptocurrency exchanges could account for the drop in ransomware since the beginning of the year. However, cybercriminals may also be shifting tactics.

Business email compromise (BEC), for instance, has always outpaced ransomware in terms of profitability for the cybercriminals and damages to companies. In 2017, for example, ransomware [accounted for only 0.2% of losses](#) tracked by the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), while BEC accounted for 27% of losses. In 2021, BEC accounted for 35% of dollar losses, while ransomware had climbed slightly to 0.7%, [according to IC3 data](#).

As governments focus more on dissuading the criminal use of cryptocurrencies, schemes that do not rely on cryptocurrency — BEC steals actual funds from businesses — will take off, says Crane Hassold, director of threat intelligence for cybersecurity firm Abnormal Security. The company has observed [a growing number of BEC-related emails over the past five years](#) — a trend he expects to continue.

"Inserting more friction into cryptocurrency transactions and making them more difficult to use for illicit purposes ... are things that cybercriminals can't compensate for and would likely drive down the overall ROI for cryptocurrency-driving cybercrimes, like ransomware," he says, adding: "We've ... observed a growing number of more sophisticated actors from countries like Russia and Israel enter the BEC space in recent years, which indicates that an expanding population of actors are realizing how lucrative BEC attacks can be."

Other explanations for a drop in ransomware attacks include the disruption of the Conti — [associated with an 18% drop in ransomware activity](#) — and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, since both countries are home to some of the primary actors in the ransomware scene.

"Ebb and Flow"

However, other data suggests that ransomware groups are recovering quickly. Threat intelligence firm Digital Shadows found that the 88 data-leakage websites that it tracks had listed 705 victims in the second quarter of 2022, [up 21% from the previous quarter](#).

The recovery suggests that ransomware groups are fairly immune to the price fluctuations in their primary way of monetizing infections. The groups have few other options for getting paid, and until cryptocurrency poses more risk, they will continue, says Mark Manglicmot, senior vice president of security services at Arctic Wolf.

"There is no good alternative to cryptocurrency at this point, so I don't see cybercriminals asking for anything else," he says. "I don't think that cryptocurrency will totally collapse and go away, so what we see happening — the ebb and flow — will continue."

However, the volatility may convince cybercriminals to make the handling of cryptocurrency more flexible in their tools kits. The cryptocurrency used in different campaigns could just be a swappable piece that cybercriminals will change regularly, like servers, IP addresses, and malware signatures, says Manglicmot.

"Changing the way they operate, changing the infrastructure, while maintaining the fundamental infrastructure behind the operations is something that they already do, so I could see them seeing them using one cryptocurrency for some time and then switching to another," he says. "It would be almost like diversifying their portfolio."

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SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/dhs-review-board-deems-log4j-an-endemic-cyber-threat
GIST	<p>The US Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Safety Review Board (CSRB) has concluded that the Apache Log4j vulnerability disclosed in December 2021 will remain a significant risk to organizations for the next decade or longer.</p> <p>The recently formed board, made up of private industry and government cybersecurity experts, determined that the open source community is not adequately resourced to ensure the security of its code and requires broad assistance from stakeholders across the private and public sectors. In a report published, today, the board recommended that federal agencies — as some of the largest consumers of open source code — contribute to open source security and called on the government to consider funding investments to improve security of the ecosystem.</p> <p>CSRB released a set of 19 high-level recommendations for organizations to mitigate exposure to Log4j-related attacks and other similar software supply chain risks going forward. The recommendations for organizations include looking for and replacing vulnerable Log4j versions, establishing processes to prevent re-introduction of vulnerable versions into the environment, and maintaining an accurate inventory of IT assets and applications.</p> <p>An Endemic Vulnerability</p> <p>The CSRB's conclusions and recommendations are based on its months-long investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Log4j vulnerability disclosure and the response to it from the open source community, technology vendors, and government and private organizations.</p> <p>"The Board assesses that Log4j is an 'endemic vulnerability' and that vulnerable instances of Log4j will remain in systems for many years to come," the CSRB said a report Thursday that summarized its findings.</p> <p>"Though exploitation of Log4j has been at lower levels than expected and there has been no big Log4j attacks on critical infrastructure targets, the threat is not diminished," the report noted. "Significant risk remains."</p> <p>"The most important aspects of the CSRB report should not surprise anyone who understands the reality of our complex interconnected world," says Katie Moussouris, founder and CEO of Luta Security and a CSRB member. "We depend on open source technology that isn't as well-supported from a security standpoint even though we need it to be, to help combat threats," she says.</p> <p>The DHS established CSRB in February 2022 in response to a cybersecurity Executive Order the Biden administration issued last May. The CSRB's mandate is to get security experts from government and private organizations to review and assesses significant security events so improvements can be at a national level to prevent similar incidents. The Log4j review was the CSRB's first mission.</p> <p>Apache Log4j is an open source logging tool that is present in almost every single Java application environment. In November 2021, a security engineer with China's e-commerce giant Alibaba reported a vulnerability (CVE-2021-44228) in Log4j to its maintainer, the Apache Software Foundation (ASF). The vulnerability — in a Log4j component for data storage and retrieval called Java Naming and Directory Interface (JNDI) — basically gave attackers a way to take complete remote control of vulnerable systems. Public disclosure of the vulnerability on Dec. 9, 2021, triggered widespread concern because it was easy to exploit, was ubiquitously present, and had disastrous consequences.</p> <p>Another major, continuing issue — and one that the CSRB highlighted in its report — is the fact that vulnerable versions of Log4j are often not easily detected because of how deeply embedded the component can be in many environments.</p> <p>A Preventable Catastrophe?</p> <p>The CSRB review showed that an individual member of the open source community submitted the vulnerable JNDI component for inclusion with Log4j back in 2013. The Log4j team accepted the</p>

component, and it was later integrated into thousands of applications that used Log4j. The Board determined that the vulnerability could have been detected back in 2013 if the Log4j team had someone with security skills to review the code, or if they had training in secure coding practices.

"Unfortunately, the resources to perform such a review were not available to the volunteer developers who led this open-source project in 2013," the Board said.

Investigators found that the organizations which responded most effectively to the Log4j vulnerability disclosure were also the ones that had effective asset and risk management processes in place and had the resources to mobilize quick action on an enterprisewide scale. But few organizations were able to mount that kind of response, or had the speed required to respond to a vulnerability of this magnitude, CSRB found. As a result, there was considerable delay in both their assessment of risk from the vulnerability and in their management of it. Many had to decide whether to upgrade to the fixed version of Log4j that the ASF released — and risk business disruption from potential application breakages — or leave the vulnerability untouched and risk attack.

"The Log4j event highlighted fundamental adoption gaps in vulnerability response practices and overall cybersecurity hygiene," the report said.

Moussouris says Log4j highlighted the critical need for organizations to [know their assets](#) and what versions of software are running on their critical systems. "What might surprise the public is that so few organizations actually have a current list of their critical assets and what software is running on their networks," she says. "We're not prepared to respond to the next library incident until that changes."

One major takeaway from CSRB's report is the need for more coordinated action around open source security. Often, widely used open source components such as Log4j are maintained by volunteer teams with little consideration for security. They typically do not have coordinated vulnerability disclosure and response teams to investigate reported vulnerabilities and to address them.

"To reduce recurrence of the introduction of vulnerabilities like Log4j, it is essential that public and private sector stakeholders create centralized resourcing and security assistance structures that can support the open-source community going forward," CSRB said.

Increased Support for Open Source Ecosystem

Eric Brewer, vice president of infrastructure at Google, says the report provides a positive and nuanced view of how organizations need to approach open source use in their environments. "If you are using open source, you can't expect other people to magically fix security issues for you," he says. Implicit in the use of open source code is the fact that organizations are consuming the software "as-is." That means they need to share responsibility for mitigating risk associated with it as well, Brewer says.

He welcomes the CSRB's call for increased investments around open source security and says what's also needed are more organizations that can serve as curators for major open source projects. Big companies such as Google could fix vulnerabilities in open source code that they themselves consume and then offer the curated software so others can safely use it. He points to other organizations such as Red Hat and Databricks, which offer curated versions of major open source projects, as other examples.

"Open source software is fundamentally managed differently than commercial software, but open source software plays a key role in the success of commercial software," says Tim Mackey, principal security strategy at Synopsys Cybersecurity Research Center. Organizations that depend on a commercial vendor to alert them of a problem in an open source component are presuming the vendor is properly managing their usage of open source and that they are able to identify and alert all users of their impacted software. To mitigate the risk, "software consumers should implement a trust-but-verify model to validate whether the software they're given doesn't contain unpatched vulnerabilities," Mackey says.

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SOURCE	https://www.proofpoint.com/us/blog/threat-insight/above-fold-and-your-inbox-tracing-state-aligned-activity-targeting-journalists?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those involved in media make for appealing targets given the unique access, information, and insights they can provide on topics of state-designated import. • Proofpoint researchers have observed APT actors since early 2021 regularly targeting and posing as journalists and media organizations to advance their state-aligned collection requirements and initiatives. • The identified campaigns have leveraged a variety of techniques from using web beacons for reconnaissance to sending malware to establish initial access into the target's network. • The focus on media by APTs is unlikely to ever wane, making it important for journalists to protect themselves, their sources, and the integrity of their information by ensuring they have an accurate threat model and secure themselves appropriately. <p>Overview</p> <p>Journalists and media organizations suffer from many of the same threats as everyone else. Between threat actors wanting to steal credentials to resell or to utilize compromised hosts for brokered initial access to spread ransomware, among other threats, this sector is no stranger to the dangers of the threat landscape. Advanced persistent threat (APT) actors, however, look to those in the field of media for different purposes; ones that could have far-reaching impacts.</p> <p>Journalists and media organizations are well sought-after targets with Proofpoint researchers observing APT actors, specifically those that are state-sponsored or state-aligned, routinely masquerading as or targeting journalists and media organizations because of the unique access and information they can provide. The media sector and those that work within it can open doors that others cannot. A well-timed, successful attack on a journalist's email account could provide insights into sensitive, budding stories and source identification. A compromised account could be used to spread disinformation or pro-state propaganda, provide disinformation during times of war or pandemic, or be used to influence a politically charged atmosphere. Most commonly, phishing attacks targeting journalists are used for espionage or to gain key insights into the inner workings of another government, company, or other area of state-designated import.</p> <p>Proofpoint data since early 2021 shows a sustained effort by APT actors worldwide attempting to target or leverage journalists and media personas in a variety of campaigns, including those well-timed to sensitive political events in the United States. Some campaigns have targeted the media for a competitive intelligence edge while others have targeted journalists immediately following their coverage painting a regime in a poor light or as a means to spread disinformation or propaganda. For the purposes of this report, we focus on the activities of a handful of APT actors assessed to be aligned with the state interests of China, North Korea, Iran, and Turkey.</p> <p>Targeting Journalists' Work Email Accounts</p> <p>As observed in Proofpoint data, targeting journalists' work email accounts is by far the most seen locus of attack used by APT actors against this target set. It is important to note that journalists are communicating with external, foreign, and often semi-anonymous parties to gather information. This outreach increases the risk of phishing since journalists, often by necessity, communicate with unknown recipients more so than the average user. Verifying or gaining access to such accounts can be an entry point for threat actors for later stage attacks on a media organization's network or to gain access to desired information.</p> <p>China</p> <p>Since early 2021, the APT actor tracked by Proofpoint as TA412, known also as Zirconium based on public reporting by Microsoft about a phishing reconnaissance team within this larger APT threat actor designation, has engaged in numerous reconnaissance phishing campaigns targeting US-based journalists. TA412, which is believed to be aligned with the Chinese state interest and to have strategic espionage objectives, has favored using malicious emails containing web beacons in these campaigns. This is a technique consistently used by the threat actor since at least 2016, however, it was likely in use for years prior. Web beacons, which are commonly referred to as tracking pixels, tracking beacons, and web bugs,</p>

embed a hyperlinked non-visible object within the body of an email that, when enabled, attempts to retrieve a benign image file from an actor-controlled server.

Proofpoint researchers assess these campaigns have been intended to validate targeted emails are active and to gain fundamental information about the recipients' network environments. Web beacons can provide the following technical artifacts to an attacker which, in turn, can serve as reconnaissance information as a threat actor plans their next stage of attack:

- Externally visible IP addresses
- User-Agent string
- Email address
- Validation that the targeted user account is active

The campaigns by TA412 and their ilk evolved over the course of months, adjusting lures to best fit the current US political environment and switching to target US-based journalists focused on different areas of interest to the Chinese government. The campaigns which targeted journalists were part of a broader pattern of reconnaissance phishing conducted by this threat actor over many years.

2021: Between January and February 2021, Proofpoint researchers identified five campaigns by TA412 targeting US-based journalists, most notably those covering US politics and national security during events that gained international attention. Of note a very abrupt shift in targeting of reconnaissance phishing occurred in the days immediately preceding the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol Building. Proofpoint researchers observed a focus on Washington DC and White House correspondents during this time. The malicious emails utilized subject lines pulled from recent US news articles, such as "Jobless Benefits Run Out as Trump Resists Signing Relief Bill," "US issues Russia threat to China," and "Trump Call to Georgia Official Might Violate State and Federal Law."

The message bodies duplicated text included in the news articles and the web beacon URLs included a benign PNG file with a 0x0 aspect ratio that was retrieved as part of the web beacon in the following format:

- `hxxp://www.actor-controlled domain[.]com/Free/<Targeted User Email Fragment>/0103/Customer.png`.

The URL structure designates an actor-controlled domain, a campaign identifier, a victim identifier, a campaign date, and the name of the benign PNG resource.

In August 2021, after a months-long break, TA412 again turned to targeting journalists, but this time those working cybersecurity, surveillance, and privacy issues with a focus on China. Those targeted appeared to have written extensively on social media privacy issues and Chinese disinformation campaigns, signaling an interest by the Chinese state in media narratives that could push a negative global opinion or perception of China. These campaigns mirrored those identified earlier in 2021 but demonstrated an evolving web beacon URL structure that changes over time. The observed structure was:

- `hxxp://[actor-controlled domain/IP]/stringhere/AbbreviatedVictimAddress[@]AbbreviatedTargetedOrganization/filename[.]png`.

2022: After an observed pause in targeting journalists, Proofpoint researchers identified a resumption of targeting this sector on February 9, 2022. The campaigns were numerous and occurred over a period of ten days. These campaigns strongly resembled those noted in early 2021 and indicated a desire to collect on US-based media organizations and contributors with a focus on those reporting on US and European engagement in the anticipated Russia-Ukraine war.

Subjects included:

- New bill aims to prohibit US military aid to Ukraine
- US issues Russia threat to China
- Macron reveals Putin 'guarantees'
- UK to arm Ukraine with anti-ship missiles against Russia - Kiev's envoy
- US says how Ukraine stand-off can be resolved

- UK says invasion 'highly likely'
- White House says door for diplomacy with Russia remains open, but troop buildup is continuing

Another Chinese APT group, **TA459**, in late April 2022 targeted media personnel with emails containing a malicious [Royal Road](#) RTF [attachment](#) (acknowledge.doc) that, if opened, would install and execute Chinoxy malware. This malware is a backdoor that is used to gain persistence on a victim's machine. Researchers at Bitdefender have [observed](#) the threat actor's use of Chinoxy extensively in Southeast Asia since at least 2018. Of note, the targeted entity was responsible for reporting on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which aligns with TA459's historic mandate of collecting on intelligence matters related to Russia and Belarus.

This campaign used a possibly compromised Pakistani government email address to send the emails and looked to entice media recipients with a lure on foreign policy in Afghanistan. To add to the credibility of the emails, TA459 included links to a benign YouTube video produced by the Islamabad Security Dialogue, which references disinformation campaigns.

North Korea

In a vengeful twist, the North Korea-aligned **TA404** in early 2022 targeted a US-based media organization with job opportunity-themed phishing. This attack occurred after the organization published an article critical of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un—a well-known motivator for action by North Korea-aligned APT actors. TA404, known more broadly as Lazarus, typically engages in highly targeted campaigns that begin with benign messages. This campaign aligned with that expected behavior. It started with reconnaissance phishing that used URLs customized to each recipient. The URLs impersonated a job posting with landing pages designed to look like a branded job posting site. If a victim interacted with the URL, which contained a unique target ID, the server resolving the domain would have received confirmation that the email was delivered, and the intended target had interacted with it. This request also provides identifying information about the computer, or device, allowing the host to keep track of the intended target.

While Proofpoint researchers did not observe follow-up emails, considering this threat actor's proclivity for later sending malware-laden email attachments, it is likely that TA404 would have attempted to send malicious template document attachment or something similar in the future. Researchers at the Google Threat Analysis Group (TAG) on March 24, 2022 disclosed details on this campaign as part of ["Operation Dream Job."](#) While journalism and media were not listed among the targeted sectors, Proofpoint has observed shared indicators of compromise utilized in both campaigns identified earlier this year and those reported by Google TAG.

Targeting Journalists' Social Media Accounts

Targeting journalists and media organizations for their social media account credentials can have significant consequences. For example, in 2013 a threat actor [took over](#) the official Associated Press Twitter account and posted a tweet claiming President Barack Obama had been injured in an attack on the White House. The stock market dropped more than 100 points in roughly two minutes following the tweet. Two years later, in 2015, a threat actor [compromised](#) about 130 Twitter accounts of influential individuals and tricked some of their followers into transferring more than \$100,000 in Bitcoin to attacker-controlled accounts.

While often times campaigns looking to compromise social media accounts, including those by APTs, do not result in such severe or observable outcomes, they can still wind up requiring more than just an account reset or the activation of multi-factor authentication (MFA), especially since enabling [MFA](#) is not a guarantee of complete account protection.

Turkey

Since early 2022, Proofpoint researchers have observed a prolific threat actor, tracked as **TA482**, regularly engaging in credential harvesting campaigns that target the social media accounts of mostly US-based journalists and media organizations. This victimology, TA482's use of services originating from Turkey to host its domains and infrastructure, as well as Turkey's [history](#) of leveraging [social media](#) to spread pro-

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and pro-Justice and Development Party (Turkey's ruling party) propaganda support Proofpoint's assessment that TA482 is aligned with the Turkish state.

Ongoing campaigns have narrowed in on Twitter credentials of any individuals that write for media publications. This includes journalists from well-known news outlets to those writing for an academic institution and everything in-between. The malicious emails are typically Twitter security themed and attempt to grab a recipient's attention with subjects alerting the user to a suspicious or new login location.

If the target clicks on the link supplied in the email, they are taken to a credential harvesting landing page which impersonates a Twitter login page to reset their password.

Proofpoint researchers cannot independently verify the motivations behind these campaigns, but the possibilities abound and, based on historical Turkey threat actor activity, could include using the compromised accounts to target a journalist's social media contacts, use the accounts for defacement, or to spread propaganda. It is possible these attacks will ramp up as Turkey's 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections draw near.

Posing as Journalists

There is an inherent sense of intrigue when one is approached by a journalist to discuss an area of expertise. The allure of having research highlighted in the media is often a great motivator to overlook or disregard signs that this opportunity may not be entirely legitimate. This social engineering tactic successfully exploits the human desire for recognition and is being leveraged by APT actors wishing to target academics and foreign policy experts worldwide, likely in an effort to gain access to sensitive information.

Iran

Multiple Iran-aligned APT actors use journalists or newspapers as pretexts to surveil targets and attempt to harvest their credentials. One of the most active in Proofpoint telemetry is **TA453**, also known as Charming Kitten. TA453, which we assess with high confidence supports the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps intelligence collection efforts, routinely masquerades as journalists from around the world. The threat actor uses these personas to engage in benign conversations with targets, which consist mostly of academics and policy experts working on Middle Eastern foreign affairs.

...the content of TA453's initial outreach emails indicate a degree of research on the intended target likely to enhance the believability of the request and to encourage further dialogue.

If the initial email is ignored, TA453 will often recontact individuals to follow up (Figure 7). If the targeted recipient does engage in conversation with the persona, TA453 will eventually invite them to a virtual meeting to have further discussions via a customized, but benign PDF (Figure 8).

The vast majority of TA453 campaigns ultimately lead to credential harvesting. The benign PDFs, similar to Figure 8, are typically delivered from file hosting services and almost always contain a link to a URL shortener and IP tracker that redirects targets to the credential harvesting domains on actor-controlled infrastructure.

TA456, also known as Tortoiseshell, is another Iran-aligned threat actor that routinely masquerades as media organizations sending newsletters across the ideological spectrum, including Fox News and the Guardian. TA456 has repeatedly targeted the same users with newsletter themed emails containing web beacons. This activity likely has complemented TA456's efforts to deliver malware via relationships built on social media similar to [previous campaigns](#).

Lastly, **TA457**, an Iran-aligned threat actor active in Proofpoint data since late 2021, has been known to masquerade as an "iNews Reporter" to deliver malware to public relations personnel for companies located in the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. For example, in early March 2022, TA457 sent an email with the ironic subject "Iran Cyber War" and the actor-controlled domain news-spot[.]live. The campaign continued TA457's pattern of using news themed lure websites to deliver a malicious URL. The URL

structure (news-spot[.]live/Reports/1/?id=[Campaign/Lure Identifier]&pid=[TargetIdentifier]) has both an identifier to track which lure documents to deliver along with a PID to determine which recipient is receiving the phish. The themes of documents have included Iran, Russia, drones, war crimes, “secret weapons,” and more. When a user clicks the malicious URL, two files are downloaded: a Word document and an .scr file. When macros are enabled on the document, it drops an embedded executable file (DnsDig.exe). When the reader.scr file is dropped, it downloads DnsDig.exe from the URL and also drops iran.pdf as a decoy to the user. [DnsDig](#) is a TA457 remote access trojan that uses DNS tunneling to a hardcoded domain (cyberclub[.]one).

Between September 2021 and March 2022, Proofpoint observed TA457 campaigns approximately every two to three weeks. The March 2022 campaign targeted both individual and generic, group email addresses such as international.media@[redacted].com at less than ten Proofpoint customers involved in energy, media, government, and manufacturing.

Conclusion

Targeting journalists and media organizations is not novel. APT actors, regardless of their state affiliation, have and will likely always have a mandate to target journalists and media organizations and will use associated personas to further their objectives and collection priorities. From intentions to gather sensitive information to attempts to manipulate public perceptions, the knowledge and access that a journalist or news outlet can provide is unique in the public space. Targeting the media sector also lowers the risk of failure or discovery to an APT actor than going after other, more hardened targets of interest, such as government entities.

The varied approaches by APT actors—using web beacons for reconnaissance, credential harvesting, and sending malware to gain a foothold in a recipient’s network—means those operating in the media space need to stay vigilant. Assessing one’s personal level of risk can give an individual a good sense of the odds they will end up as a target. Such as, if you report on China or North Korea or associated threat actors, you may become part of their collection requirements in the future. Being aware of the broad attack surface—all the varied online platforms used for sharing information and news—an APT actor can leverage is also key to preventing oneself from becoming a victim. And ultimately practicing caution and verifying the identity or source of an email can halt an APT attack in its nascent stage.

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HEADLINE	07/14 Unmask anonymous users on browsers?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/web-deanonymization-side-channel-attack-njit/#intcid=wired-verso-hp-trending-2569b964-8fba-42df-bc6e-204a71f1153a_popular4-1
GIST	<p>EVERYONE FROM ADVERTISERS and marketers to government-backed hackers and spyware makers wants to identify and track users across the web. And while a staggering amount of infrastructure is already in place to do exactly that, the appetite for data and new tools to collect it has proved insatiable. With that reality in mind, researchers from the New Jersey Institute of Technology are warning this week about a novel technique attackers could use to de-anonymize website visitors and potentially connect the dots on many components of targets’ digital lives.</p> <p>The findings, which NJIT researchers will present at the Usenix Security Symposium in Boston next month, show how an attacker who tricks someone into loading a malicious website can determine whether that visitor controls a particular public identifier, like an email address or social media account, thus linking the visitor to a piece of potentially personal data.</p> <p>When you visit a website, the page can capture your IP address, but this doesn’t necessarily give the site owner enough information to individually identify you. Instead, the hack analyzes subtle features of a potential target’s browser activity to determine whether they are logged into an account for an array of services, from YouTube and Dropbox to Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and more. Plus the attacks work against every major browser, including the anonymity-focused Tor Browser.</p>

“If you’re an average internet user, you may not think too much about your privacy when you visit a random website,” says Reza Curtmola, one of the study authors and a computer science professor at NJIT. “But there are certain categories of internet users who may be more significantly impacted by this, like people who organize and participate in political protest, journalists, and people who network with fellow members of their minority group. And what makes these types of attacks dangerous is they’re very stealthy. You just visit the website and you have no idea that you’ve been exposed.”

The risk that government-backed hackers and cyber-arms dealers will attempt to de-anonymize web users isn’t just theoretical. Researchers have documented a [number](#) of [techniques](#) used in the wild and have witnessed situations in which attackers identified individual users, though it wasn’t clear how.

Other theoretical work has looked at an attack similar to the one NJIT researchers developed, but much of this past investigation has focused on grabbing revealing data that’s leaked between websites when one service makes a request to another. As a result of this prior work, browsers and website developers have improved how data is isolated and restricted when content loads, making these potential attack paths less feasible. Knowing that attackers are motivated to seek out techniques for identifying users, though, the researchers wanted to explore additional approaches.

“Let’s say you have a forum for underground extremists or activists, and a law enforcement agency has covertly taken control of it,” Curtmola says. “They want to identify the users of this forum but can’t do this directly because the users use pseudonyms. But let’s say that the agency was able to also gather a list of Facebook accounts who are suspected to be users of this forum. They would now be able to correlate whoever visits the forum with a specific Facebook identity.”

How this de-anonymization attack works is difficult to explain but relatively easy to grasp once you have the gist.

Someone carrying out the attack needs a few things to get started: a website they control, a list of accounts tied to people they want to identify as having visited that site, and content posted to the platforms of the accounts on their target list that either allows the targeted accounts to view that content or blocks them from viewing it—the attack works both ways.

Next, the attacker embeds the aforementioned content on the malicious website. Then they wait to see who clicks. If anyone on the targeted list visits the site, the attackers will know who they are by analyzing which users can (or cannot) view the embedded content.

The attack takes advantage of a number of factors most people likely take for granted: Many major services—from YouTube to Dropbox—allow users to host media and embed it on a third-party website. Regular users typically have an account with these ubiquitous services and, crucially, they often stay logged into these platforms on their phones or computers. Finally, these services allow users to restrict access to content uploaded to them. For example, you can set your Dropbox account to privately share a video with one or a handful of other users. Or you can upload a video to Facebook publicly but block certain accounts from viewing it.

These “block” or “allow” relationships are the crux of how the researchers found that they can reveal identities. In the “allow” version of the attack, for instance, hackers might quietly share a photo on Google Drive with a Gmail address of potential interest. Then they embed the photo on their malicious web page and lure the target there. When visitors’ browsers attempt to load the photo via Google Drive, the attackers can accurately infer whether a visitor is allowed to access the content—aka, whether they have control of the email address in question.

Thanks to the major platforms’ existing privacy protections, the attacker can’t check directly whether the site visitor was able to load the content. But the NJIT researchers realized they could analyze accessible information about the target’s browser and the behavior of their processor as the request is happening to make an inference about whether the content request was allowed or denied.

	<p>The technique is known as a “side channel attack” because the researchers found that they could accurately and reliably make this determination by training machine learning algorithms to parse seemingly unrelated data about how the victim’s browser and device process the request. Once the attacker knows that the one user they allowed to view the content has done so (or that the one user they blocked has been blocked) they have de-anonymized the site visitor.</p> <p>Complicated as it may sound, the researchers warn that it would be simple to carry out once attackers have done the prep work. It would only take a couple of seconds to potentially unmask each visitor to the malicious site—and it would be virtually impossible for an unsuspecting user to detect the hack. The researchers developed a browser extension that can thwart such attacks, and it is available for Chrome and Firefox. But they note that it may impact performance and isn’t available for all browsers.</p> <p>Through a major disclosure process to numerous web services, browsers, and web standards bodies, the researchers say they have started a larger discussion about how to comprehensively address the issue. At the moment, Chrome and Firefox have not publicly released responses. And Curtmola says fundamental and likely infeasible changes to the way processors are designed would be needed to address the issue at the chip level. Still, he says that collaborative discussions through the World Wide Web Consortium or other forums could ultimately produce a broad solution.</p> <p>“Vendors are trying to see if it’s worth the effort to resolve this,” he says. “They need to be convinced that it’s a serious enough issue to invest in fixing it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Hacking of hospitals: deadly ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jul/14/ransomware-attacks-cybersecurity-targeting-us-hospitals
GIST	<p>Last week, the US government warned that hospitals across the US have been targeted by an aggressive ransomware campaign originating from North Korea since 2021.</p> <p>Ransomware hacks, in which attackers encrypt computer networks and demand payment to make them functional again, have been a growing concern for both the private and public sector since the 90s. But they can be particularly devastating in the healthcare industry, where even minutes of down time can have deadly consequences, and have become ominously frequent.</p> <p>The number of ransomware attacks on healthcare organizations increased 94% from 2021 to 2022, according to a report from the cybersecurity firm Sophos. More than two-thirds of healthcare organizations in the US said they had experienced a ransomware attack in 2021, the study said, up from 34% in 2020.</p> <p>Ransomware attacks on healthcare are particularly common in the US, with 41% of such attacks globally having been carried out against US-based firms in 2021.</p> <p>“The current outlook is terrible,” said Israel Barak, CISO of Cybereason. “We are seeing the industry experience an extremely sharp increase in both the quantity and level of sophistication of these attacks.”</p> <p>Ransomware hacks have caused major healthcare disruptions, including delayed chemotherapy treatments and ambulances being diverted from a San Diego emergency room after computer systems were frozen. In 2021, a lawsuit filed by the mother of a baby who died in Alabama alleged the first “death by ransomware”, blaming a 2019 hack of a hospital for fatal brain damage of the newborn after heart rate monitors failed.</p> <p>The possibly devastating consequences for medical facilities may be one of the reasons hackers have identified them as a high-profile target. “The North Korean state-sponsored cyber actors likely assume healthcare organizations are willing to pay ransoms because these organizations provide services that</p>

are critical to human life and health,” said the advisory from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

CISA and others advise hospitals against paying ransoms, but providers often feel they have no choice, said Barak. In 2021, 61% of healthcare organizations that suffered a ransomware attack paid the ransom – the highest percentage of any industry sector.

“When lives are at stake, it makes the decision very easy,” Barak said. “These attackers have identified medical organizations as very, very good targets because they are more likely to pay.”

Attacks are typically carried out by private groups of criminals, experts say: in the third quarter of 2021, 30% of ransomware attacks on healthcare entities were carried out by Conti, a crime syndicate thought to be based in Russia, according to an industry report from cybersecurity firm BreachQuest.

But the North Korea incident revealed last week is just the latest state actor to orchestrate ransomware attacks on health care organizations after the FBI revealed in June it had thwarted an attack from Iran on a Boston Children’s hospital.

Underfunded hospitals hit by Covid squeeze

The healthcare industry has been hit by a perfect storm of factors that have escalated the ransomware problem, experts say: patient information is increasingly being digitized as hospitals struggle with small internet security budgets.

In 2009, the Obama administration passed a bill requiring all public and private healthcare providers to adopt electronic medical records by 2014, resulting in a massive migration of paper patient records to online systems. But today, just 4-7% of the average healthcare provider’s annual IT budget is focused on cybersecurity, the BreachQuest study said.

“Healthcare providers have gone through massive digital transformation in a very short amount of time,” said Hank Schless, senior security expert at the cybersecurity firm Lookout.

The move was accelerated by the pandemic, he added, as more providers shifted to telehealth to connect with patients during lockdown and hospital staff were stretched thin by the influx of sick and dying patients.

CISA has advised a “3-2-1 backup approach” for healthcare entities, including saving three copies of each type of data in two different formats, including one offline. But the agency’s advisory to hospitals is “somewhat unhelpful”, said Vincent Berk, chief security officer at the cybersecurity firm Quantum Xchange, offering generic recommendations about securing data with little clear path to doing so.

“The issue with this attack, and any other ransomware attack, is that the cure doesn’t really exist,” he said. “In other words, if it happens, it is already too late.”

Legislators are attempting to fill in those gaps. In May, Senator Patty Murray of Washington led a hearing on strengthening cybersecurity in the healthcare and education sectors, saying that the US “needs to address cybersecurity attacks and ensure they are treated like the national security threat they are”.

“These kinds of challenges don’t just cause major headaches, lawsuits, and expenses for hospitals,” she said. “They put patients in danger. They undermine our national security. And in some cases they even cost lives.”

In March 2022 the Senate introduced a bipartisan bill called the Healthcare Cybersecurity Act, which would direct CISA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collaborate on a plan to bolster cybersecurity measures among healthcare and public health organizations.

	<p>Those measures would include cybersecurity training to employees of health organizations and authorize studies from CISA to identify risks in the industry. It is unclear when the bill is set for a vote, but experts say such legislation is more urgent than ever.</p> <p>“There’s zero deterrence right now,” Barak said. “Until we find a more effective way to tackle this issue, I am afraid the outlook is not looking good.”</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/13 NCTC warns of Iran assassination plots
SOURCE	https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/u-s-intelligence-warns-about-iranian-assassination-plots-report/
GIST	<p>Iran's terrorism campaign targeting top current and former U.S. government officials continues, according to a National Counterterrorism Center report obtained by Yahoo News. The center reportedly sent an assessment on the threat to law-enforcement offices across the country last month.</p> <p>In the document, the National Counterterrorism Center reportedly warned that Iran is advancing a “multipronged campaign” against several U.S. officials, and especially those who played a role in the killing of Iranian Quds Force General Qasem Soleimani.</p> <p>“Since January 2021, Tehran has publicly expressed a willingness to conduct lethal operations inside the United States and has consistently identified former President Donald Trump, former Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, and former CENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie as among its priority targets for retribution,” the report stated. “Iran would probably view the killing or prosecution of a US official it considers equivalent in rank and stature to Soleimani or responsible for his death as successful retaliatory actions.”</p> <p>The report cited a number of incidents linked to Iran’s campaign against the U.S., including the attempted kidnapping of Iranian-American journalist Masih Alinejad last year.</p> <p>Yahoo quotes the Foundation for Defense of Democracies’ Behnam Ben Taleblu as calling it “baffling” that the Biden administration has not abandoned its talks with Iran over the assassination plots.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Secretary of State Antony Blinken seemed to confirm during a congressional hearing that Iran was targeting current U.S. officials. Previously, it was reported that Iranian terrorism plots are specifically aimed at Pompeo, in addition to former national-security adviser John Bolton.</p> <p>In recent weeks, U.S. officials have attempted to break the logjam that has restricted Washington’s nuclear talks with Tehran. Officials from the U.S. and Iran held indirect negotiations in Qatar last month — the first discussions since March — which were reported to have adjourned without any substantive breakthroughs.</p> <p>The two sides have been at an impasse over Iran’s demands that the U.S. lift its designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization. U.S. officials have claimed for months that they would not lift the designation, a stance that President Biden described again today during an interview with an Israeli television network.</p> <p>In a statement to Yahoo, the National Security Council pledged that the U.S. “will protect and defend its citizens,” without commenting directly on the intelligence report, and said that U.S. reentry into the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is “in America’s national interest.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/15 German soldier guilty of attack plot
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/15/germany-extremist-soldier-syrian/
GIST	<p>BERLIN — A German soldier who registered as a Syrian asylum seeker was convicted of preparing a “serious act of violence endangering the state,” according to German media, in one of the country’s most prominent cases of right-wing extremism in recent years.</p> <p>A 33-year-old lieutenant in the German military, identified by the court as Franco A. but widely named in the media as Franco Albrecht, was sentenced to five-and-a-half years in jail, according to German press present in the courtroom in Frankfurt as the verdict was read out.</p> <p>The extraordinary case unfolded like a movie plot when Albrecht was arrested in 2017 after trying to retrieve a loaded pistol from a bathroom in the Vienna airport. The gun had been discovered and reported by a cleaning lady, and police then lay in wait for someone to retrieve it.</p> <p>A run of Albrecht’s fingerprints revealed that he had been leading a double life: the officer in the German military was also registered in Bavaria as a Syrian refugee named as Benjamin David.</p> <p>Prosecutors accused him of posing as a Syrian to carry out the attacks to make them appear like “radical Islamist acts of terrorism.” He had been plotting his actions since 2015, during the thick of the so-called migrant crisis, when more than a million refugees — largely from war-torn Syria — were arriving in Germany.</p> <p>But while he was convicted of planning an attack, the court said it could not establish whether his intention was to blame it on the refugee population. The defendant had maintained he had registered as a refugee to expose what he saw as problems with the asylum system.</p> <p>The court found that he had “nationalist, right-wing extremist sentiments,” according to the German news agency DPA.</p> <p>He was found guilty on firearms charges after being accused of hoarding weapons of war, including a semiautomatic rifle and two semiautomatic pistols, over 1,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 50 explosive devices. Some of the explosives and ammunition had been stolen from German military stocks, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Defense lawyers had argued that there was insufficient evidence he was planning an attack. While the father of three had admitted stockpiling weapons, his lawyers said they were for defense in case of a collapse of the state.</p> <p>In another twist earlier this year, Albrecht, who had not be held in detention while on trial, was arrested again in February on his way back from the French city of Strasbourg. A police search found him to be in possession of a box full of Nazi memorabilia and notes that described the threats to the German nation from migration and intermarriage.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/13 France prepares future Sahel strategy
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/ahead-mali-withdraw-france-prepares-future-sahel-strategy-2022-07-13/
GIST	<p>PARIS, July 13 (Reuters) - French officials head to Niger on Friday to redefine the country's strategy to fight Islamist militants in the Sahel as thousands of troops complete a withdrawal from Mali and concerns mount over the growing threat to coastal West African states.</p> <p>Coups in Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso have weakened France's alliances in its former colonies, emboldened jihadists who control large swathes of desert and scrubland, and opened the door to greater Russian influence.</p>

Concerns have grown that the exit of 2,400 French troops from Mali - the epicentre of violence in the Sahel region and strongholds of both al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates - is worsening violence, destabilising neighbours and spurring migration.

With the withdrawal expected to be completed by the end of the summer, France's new Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna and Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu arrive in Niger on Friday to seal a regional redeployment.

Niger will become the hub for French troops, with some 1,000 soldiers based in the capital Niamey with fighter jets, drones and helicopters. Some 300-400 would be dispatched for special operations with Niger troops in the border regions with Burkina and Mali, French officials told reporters in a briefing.

Another 700-1,000 would be based in Chad with an undisclosed number of special forces operating elsewhere in the region. French troops will no longer carry out missions or pursue militants into Mali once the exit is complete, the officials said.

"Beyond Mali, the democratic decline in West Africa is extremely worrying with successive putsches in Mali twice, in Guinea in September 2021, in Burkina Faso in January of this year. France will nevertheless continue despite these events, this withdrawal from Mali, to help West African armies fight against terrorist groups," Colonna told a parliamentary hearing on Tuesday.

"We are currently consulting with our concerned partners to define with them, according to their requests and their needs, the nature of the support that we can provide them."

A French diplomatic source said the aim was to present a new strategy to President Emmanuel Macron in September.

French officials said the onus going forward would be on regional countries to lead on security, while also focusing more on development, good governance and education. The ministers would announce 50 million euro aid to enhance the electricity network in Niger as well as budgetary support.

A key area of concern is how and whether French and European troops will be used to support countries in the coastal Gulf of Guinea nations such as Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast, where there has been a rise in attacks. Al Qaeda's regional arm has said it would turn its attention to the region.

French officials said that at this stage there had been no formal request for further military assistance. Some European countries had shown an interest in continuing regional operations post Mali, the officials said.

Lecornu will travel to Ivory Coast, which also hosts French troops, on Saturday, while Macron is likely to travel to Benin at the end of July, Colonna said.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/14 Shanghai third rare extreme heat warning
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/14/shanghai-declares-third-rare-extreme-heat-warning-of-summer
GIST	<p>China's most populous city, Shanghai, has issued its highest alert for extreme heat for the third time this summer as sweltering temperatures repeatedly tested records this week.</p> <p>The commercial and industrial hub of 25 million people declared a red alert on Thursday, warning of expected temperatures of at least 40C (104F) in the next 24 hours. Temperatures soared as high as 40.6 C in the afternoon but fell short of Wednesday's 40.9 C, which matched a 2017 record.</p>

Extreme heat conditions have also taken hold in parts of Europe. Firefighters have been battling wildfires in Spain, Portugal, France and Croatia.

As of 5pm local time, Shanghai's red alert was in force. The highest of a three-tier colour-coded warning system, it requires construction and other outdoor work to be reduced or halted.

Shanghai has issued three red alerts in the past five days, though these are a relatively rare occurrence, with just 17 issued since record-keeping began in 1873.

The hot weather coincided with mass testing for Covid-19 in several districts amid minor outbreaks, adding to heat woes for both residents and health workers wearing protective suits.

Some Covid-19 testers taped bottles of frozen mineral water to their white hazmat suits as they worked, while others sat next to huge blocks of ice to cool off. "This suit is terribly hot," Peng Lei, who worked at one testing site, told Reuters. "The clothes are never dry. All day long they are wet with sweat."

Some communities also began testing in the evening, when it was cooler.

The past month's unusually hot spell has affected half of China. The Yangtze River basin, encompassing large cities from Shanghai to Chongqing in the heartland, has broiled in heatwaves over the past week.

By 5pm, 86 red alerts had been declared across China, most in the Yangtze basin.

Higher demand for air conditioning pushed China's maximum power load to an all-time high on Tuesday. Authorities said they were making every effort to ensure energy supplies during the summer's peak demand period.

Nations across southern Europe – experiencing the second heatwave in as many months – have been hit by a series of wildfires over the last few weeks.

In Portugal's central Leiria district, tired firefighters battled to control blazes that have been fanned by strong winds. Footage from the area on Wednesday showed smoke darkening the sky and billowing across a highway, while flames licked around the roofs of houses in one small village.

Across the border in western Spain, a fire that started in the Extremadura region on Tuesday swept into Salamanca province in the region of Castile and León, forcing the evacuation of 49 children from a summer camp on Thursday.

Regional authorities said more than 4,000 hectares (9,900 acres) of land had been burned.

Spain's meteorological agency Aemet expected the heatwave to reach its peak later on Thursday, with temperatures likely to exceed 44C in large parts of southern Spain.

On Croatia's Adriatic coast, firefighting planes swooped low to dump water over burning forests, and troops were called in to help firefighters battling to contain three major wildfires around Zadar and Šibenik.

In south-west France, about 1,000 firefighters, supported by six water-bombing planes, were battling two wildfires that started on Tuesday.

The biggest of the two Gironde fires was around the town of Landiras, south of Bordeaux, where roads have been closed and 500 residents evacuated.

The other blaze was along the Atlantic coast, close to the Dune du Pilat – the tallest sand dune in Europe – in the Arcachon Bay area, above which heavy clouds of dark smoke were seen rising into the sky.

	<p>About 6,000 people were evacuated from surrounding campsites on Wednesday, and another 4,000 people early on Thursday.</p> <p>Scientists blame human-caused climate change for the increased frequency of extreme weather such as heatwaves, which have also hit parts of China and the United States in recent days.</p> <p>A study in the journal Nature last week found the number of heatwaves in Europe has increased three-to-four times faster than in the rest of the northern mid-latitudes, such as the United States and Canada, due in large part to the jet stream air current splitting into two parts for longer periods.</p> <p>“Europe is very much affected by changes in atmospheric circulation,” co-author Kai Kornhuber, a climate scientist at Columbia University, told Reuters. It’s a heatwave hotspot.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 WA tiniest residents launched into space
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/some-of-was-tiniest-residents-to-be-launched-into-space/
GIST	<p>Some of Washington state’s smallest residents blasted into space Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Eight species of bacteria were taken, in Washington soil, to the International Space Station aboard a SpaceX craft. The soil is from a scientific field in Prosser, Benton County, run by Washington State University. Scientists will study how microgravity affects the bacteria and how soil microbial communities function in space.</p> <p>That information is key to growing food in space or on another celestial body, project researchers said.</p> <p>The eight bacteria are Dyadobacter, Ensifer, Neorhizobium, Rhodococcus, Sinorhizobium, Sphingopyxis, Streptomyces and Variovorax. The soil housing the bacteria will contain chitin, a common microbe chow found in soil worldwide.</p> <p>The ability to eat chitin, or eat byproducts given off by other species as they break down chitin, is key for the microbial community to survive, according to NASA.</p> <p>The experiment, called Dynamics of the Microbiome in Space (DynaMoS) is funded by NASA and being conducted by researchers at the Department of Energy’s Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.</p> <p>“We still have a lot to learn about how microorganisms behave on Earth,” said Janet Jansson, a chief scientist and laboratory fellow at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the leader of DynaMoS, in a NASA news release. “There are even more questions to address if we are to grow food in space, for instance on the lunar surface or for a long-lasting mission to Mars. How do microbes behave in microgravity, for instance?”</p> <p>Jansson, Ryan McClure and other PNNL scientists have spent several years exploring how communities of microorganisms behave in Earth’s soil.</p> <p>Understanding how microbes interact as they provide nutrients and protect plants “is the first step for building communities of microbes that can support plant growth in places like the moon, Mars, or the space station,” McClure said.</p> <p>The cargo resupply services mission (SpaceX CRS-25) launched from NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 5:44 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time. You can watch a replay of the launch at nasa.gov/nasalive.</p>

	<p>Other experiments on board include studies of the immune system, wound healing, soil communities and cell-free biomarkers, along with mapping the composition of Earth's dust and testing an alternative to concrete.</p> <p>The experiment includes 104 test tubes filled with the soil and microbes. Half were sent to the space station and half will grow under similar conditions (besides gravity and atmosphere) in a laboratory at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.</p> <p>Each tube contains 20 grams of soil packed with chitin and hundreds of millions of each of the eight bacteria. The tubes will be sampled four times over 12 weeks. Then the space samples will be returned to Kennedy Space Center, and the samples and microbes will be moved from Kennedy to PNNL for analysis.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/14 Bomb threats disrupt college campuses
SOURCE	https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/07/14/bomb-threats-disrupt-campus-across-country
GIST	<p>A series of bomb threats this week targeted college campuses across the country, many of them community colleges. While no bombs have been found, the threats come amid a surge of such menaces this summer, which are concerning to law enforcement officials and college leaders, who say they're disruptive to campus life and disturbing to students and employees.</p> <p>Two Eastern Florida State College campuses closed and reopened after evacuations Wednesday in response to a bomb threat.</p> <p>A slew of community colleges in Virginia were targeted Tuesday, including Eastern Shore Community College, Tidewater Community College, Virginia Peninsula Community College and Paul D. Camp Community College. Regent University and Norfolk State University, a historically Black institution, received threats, as well, according to 13News Now, an ABC affiliate news station in Virginia.</p> <p>Karen Campbell, vice president of student affairs at Tidewater Community College, said Chesapeake Police Department officers and firefighters searched the campus after a threat around 11:20 a.m. Tuesday and determined the threat was unfounded. Summer is a "slower time at the college," but she said some students, faculty and staff members were on campus for summer courses.</p> <p>"Our priority is always to make sure that our students, faculty and staff are safe," she said.</p> <p>The Wheeling Police Department in West Virginia also received a call saying there was a bomb in the main campus building at West Virginia Northern Community College shortly before 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, which led the department to investigate. After the building was evacuated, an explosive-detection dog accompanied officers who searched in and around the building, said Philip Stahl, public information officer at the Wheeling Police Department. The department issued an all-clear announcement less than two hours later.</p> <p>"Nothing was located," Stahl said. "Obviously it was a hoax in nature, and we're continuing to investigate the phone call that was made at this point."</p> <p>He noted that local media outlets have also reported threats at nearby institutions, so the department is reaching out to other law enforcement agencies to compare the threat calls. Threats came in that same afternoon at higher ed institutions in Ohio, including Belmont College, the Ohio University Zanesville and Zane State campuses, and Washington State Community College in Marietta. Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., also received a threat Tuesday afternoon, Kenosha News reported.</p>

“Obviously it’s rare ... that all of these kind of happened at once,” Stahl said. “We’re doing our part to see where the [phone] number came from, who the individual was on that line. We’ll be talking to our local agents here at the FBI office to kind of alert them on what we know and what happened on our end. They’re able to investigate across the country, so they would probably take a more broad look at what the heck is happening here.”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation press office issued a statement saying that the agency “is aware of bomb threats received by multiple colleges and universities.”

“The FBI takes all potential threats seriously and we regularly work with our law enforcement partners to determine their credibility,” the statement read. “As always, we would like to remind members of the public that if they observe anything suspicious to report it to law enforcement immediately.”

Tuesday’s incidents are the latest surge in a barrage of threats that has been going on for weeks.

For example, Ogden-Weber Technical College in Utah was evacuated July 6 because of a bomb threat and resumed normal operations the next day.

“The College thanks our security staff, employees and students for following established safety protocols resulting in a safe and swift evacuation of the campus,” reads a [statement](#) from the college. “A special thanks to our outstanding law enforcement and emergency services partners who helped secure and clear the campus.”

Two Austin Community College campuses, the Alkek Fine Arts Center at Weatherford College, the University of North Texas Health Science Center and Dallas College’s Richland campus received threats on July 7.

“Evacuate location by foot immediately,” Dallas College [tweeted](#). “Move as far as possible from building(s). Not at site? STAY AWAY for your own safety.”

Cleveland State University [received a threat](#) the next day, as did the University of Providence in Montana and at least four institutions in Maryland, including Carroll Community College, Hagerstown Community College, St. Mary’s College of Maryland and Wor-Wic Community College.

Robert Mueck, director of public safety at St. John’s College in Maryland and a member of the domestic preparedness committee for the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, said his email was “blowing up” as campus public safety officers conferred on email Listservs about the growing number of threats.

“Communications were bouncing back and forth,” he said. “We were very much on top of it. People are talking about it.”

The latest threats also come after bomb threats swept historically Black colleges and universities nationwide earlier this year, taking a [toll on the mental health](#) of students, faculty and staff members and prompting a [congressional hearing](#) in March.

While bomb threats are usually unfounded, “that doesn’t mean [students] aren’t going to be scared,” Mueck said. “There are some students who are absolutely shook up about it.”

Some students, parents and employees of the colleges have been posting on social media about their shock and concern about the bomb threats.

“MY COLLEGE GOT A BOMB THREAT EARLIER WHAT,” one student [wrote on Twitter](#). “Everyone’s fine and the campus is reopening now after an hour and a half but WHAT.”

“My college kid is home early today because some idiot called in a bomb threat on campus,” a parent [tweeted](#). “Thankful he’s safe, but frustrated that we live in a world like this.”

Mueck believes more bomb threats against campuses are happening because technology today makes it easier to make anonymous calls, and teenagers in particular “egg each other on” to make these calls over social media. For example, he highlighted the case of a [teenage gamer](#) who was reported to be involved in a spate of bomb threats in 2021, and that of a group of people using Discord, an instant messaging platform. He’s struck, however, by the number of community colleges being targeted and said he doesn’t know why these institutions have become a focus of those making the threats.

James Shaeffer, president of Eastern Shore Community College, said from his perspective, the threat against his college felt like a “one-off” incident rather than any kind of concerted effort to target community colleges. The college had to evacuate middle school and high school students on campus for summer camps, but law enforcement officials swiftly determined there was no bomb.

“If anything, it was inconvenient,” he said.

Martha Parham, senior vice president of public relations for the American Association of Community Colleges, said she is monitoring the treats, “But I’m not sure if there is an increase in occurrences or if we’re just hearing about it more often now with social media.”

Community college presidents are nonetheless “always concerned about the safety of their students and their teams, their faculty and staff” and have plans in place for potential threats, she added.

She also noted that it’s sometimes easier for community colleges to keep students safe in the event of a threat because the colleges often don’t have students living in dorms.

Mueck said law enforcement officials and campus leaders need to strike a balance between “not overreacting but not failing to react.”

“It’s the cheapest form of terrorism there is,” he said. “It’s the cheapest form of harassment. You have to do something, but some of these campuses are shutting down completely, sending everyone home or taking other kinds of action. And it really impacts the academic program of the institution. We have to be careful about that, because with the press of a phone call, you can make a college campus just go haywire.”

He said that’s exactly what people who make these threats want.

“Threats are made to create anxiety,” he said. “The person making the threat wants you to react.”

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HEADLINE	07/15 Maritime piracy, armed robbery drops
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/maritime-security/maritime-piracy-and-armed-robbery-at-lowest-level-in-decades/
GIST	<p>The International Chamber of Commerce’s International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has received the lowest number of reported piracy and armed robbery incidents for the first half of any year since 1994.</p> <p>IMB’s latest global piracy report details 58 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships, down from 68 incidents during the same period last year. In the first six months of 2022, IMB’s Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) reported 55 vessels boarded, two attempted attacks and one vessel hijacked.</p> <p>IMB Director Michael Howlett said: “Not only is this good news for the seafarers and the shipping industry it is positive news for trade which promotes economic growth. But the areas of risk shift and the shipping community must remain vigilant. We encourage governments and responding authorities to continue their patrols which create a deterrent effect.”</p>

While the reduction in reported incidents is indeed encouraging, the IMB PRC continues to caution against complacency – vessels were boarded in 96% of the reported incidents. Despite no crew kidnappings reported during this period, violence against and the threat to crews continues with 23 crew taken hostage and a further five crew threatened.

Of the 58 incidents, 12 were reported in the Gulf of Guinea, ten of which were defined as armed robberies and the remaining two as piracy. In early April, a Panamax bulk carrier was attacked and boarded by pirates 260NM off the coast of Ghana. This illustrates that despite a decrease in reported incidents, the threat of Gulf of Guinea piracy and crew kidnappings remains.

On being notified of the incident, IMB PRC immediately alerted and liaised with the Regional Authorities and international warships to request for assistance. An Italian Navy warship and its helicopter responded and instantly intervened, saving the crew and enabling the vessel to proceed to a safe port under escort.

IMB PRC commends the prompt and positive actions of the Italian Navy which it says undoubtedly resulted in the crew and ship being saved. It urges the coastal response agencies and independent international navies to continue their efforts to ensure this crime is permanently addressed in these waters which account for 74% of crew taken hostage globally.

Vessels continue to be targeted and boarded by local perpetrators when transiting the Singapore Straits, which account for over 25% of all incidents reported globally since the start of the year. The perpetrators were successful in boarding the vessels in all 16 incidents reported. While considered low level opportunistic crimes, crews continue to be at risk with weapons reported in at least six incidents.

Outside the Singapore Straits, the Indonesian archipelagic has seen a slight increase in reported incidents for the first time since 2018, with seven incidents being reported compared to five over that same period last year. Five vessels were boarded at anchor and one each while the vessels were at berth and steaming. Weapons were reported in at least three incidents with one crew reported threatened.

Although no incidents were reported in the region since the start of the year, the threat of piracy still exists in the waters off the southern Red Sea and in the Gulf of Aden, which include the Yemeni and Somali coasts. Although the opportunity for incidents has reduced, the Somali pirates continue to possess the capability and capacity to carry out incidents, and all merchant ships are advised to adhere to the recommendations in the latest Best Management Practices, while transiting in these waters.

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[Read more at the International Chamber of Commerce](#)

HEADLINE	07/15 Gang war traps thousands in Haiti slums
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/15/haiti-gang-violence-cite-soleil/
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — While the gangs clash outside, Florient Clebert, his four sons and a daughter have been trapped inside their home for days. They’ve seen several neighbors killed. His brother was shot in the head last week and could not be treated in a hospital.</p> <p>Now the family is running out of food. Clebert, 39, an out-of-work substitute teacher, has been unable to get to the bank to withdraw money. Government forces, meanwhile, seem to be doing nothing.</p> <p>“We are the masses, and we are abandoned,” he told The Washington Post on Thursday, his voice trembling as gunfire rang out in the background.</p> <p>Scores of people are dead amid days of violent clashes between warring gangs in Cité Soleil, the Haitian capital’s largest slum, and thousands more have been trapped without food or water, exacerbating the spiraling insecurity and humanitarian crises in this beleaguered Caribbean nation.</p> <p>Jöel Janéus, the mayor of Cité Soleil, said many of the dead haven’t been counted yet that but more than 50 people have been killed and more than 110 wounded since the current round of violence erupted last</p>

week. He said the gangs have burned most of the bodies, and many families have few answers about the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry's office and the interior ministry have been in touch with local officials, Janéus told The Post, but have taken little action to end the bloodshed. He said he spent his own money on food and water for residents because the mayor's office has no money.

Janéus said he was in hiding. "I'm receiving a lot of pressure and threats," he said.

The carnage in Cité Soleil, a community of more than 260,000 people on the Port-au-Prince Bay, is part of a surge of violence and [kidnappings for ransom](#) by armed gangs amid worsening political instability following the [still-unsolved assassination](#) a year ago of [President Jovenel Moïse](#).

The United Nations said this week that 1.5 million people in Port-au-Prince are trapped, "deprived of basic services and their freedom of movement," by the gang violence. The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to vote Friday on whether to extend its political mission in Haiti.

The violence in Cité Soleil erupted last week between warring coalitions of gangs: G-Pèp and the G-9, a [federation of nine gangs led by Jimmy Chérizier](#). The United States has imposed sanctions on Chérizier, a former police officer who goes by the nickname Barbecue, for allegedly leading armed groups in "coordinated, brutal attacks in Port-au-Prince neighborhoods."

In a video shared on [social media](#) this week, Chérizier held a long gun and proclaimed, "The fight to liberate the country is launched against kidnappers and robbers."

Haiti's National Human Rights Defense Network said that more than a dozen people have been disappeared in Cité Soleil and that more than 120 homes have been destroyed by arson or by heavy machinery that it alleged the National Equipment Center provided the G-9.

Kington Louis, director general of the National Equipment Center, told The Post that the allegations are false. He said one of the center's loaders was hijacked by the gangs who assassinated the driver when he refused to do what they demanded.

Doctors Without Borders called on the gangs to spare civilians. The organization said the needs for food, water and medical aid are acute in Brooklyn, an isolated neighborhood of Cité Soleil that residents have been unable to leave since July 8.

"Along the only road into Brooklyn, we have encountered corpses that are decomposing or being burned," Mumuza Muhindo, the group's head of mission in Haiti, said in a statement. "They could be people killed during the clashes or trying to leave who were shot. It is a real battlefield."

A fuel terminal near Cité Soleil temporarily suspended deliveries this week, exacerbating nationwide fuel shortages and spurring protests that blocked main roads across the capital. Fuel deliveries resumed on Thursday.

Janéus, the mayor, has been personally affected by spiraling insecurity. In November, armed bandits descended on his home in Croix-des-Bouquets, a neighborhood east of Port-au-Prince that's a stronghold of the notorious 400 Mawozo gang, and kidnapped his wife.

Friends, family and residents of Cité Soleil pitched in to help him collect the \$40,000 ransom the gang demanded. Janéus said he negotiated with Germaine "Yonyon" Joly, the leader of 400 Mawozo, who ran the gang's operations from a Port-au-Prince prison by cellphone.

Joly was transferred to the United States in May to [face charges](#) over his alleged roles in a criminal conspiracy to violate U.S. export laws by smuggling firearms to Haiti and a conspiracy to commit

	<p>hostage-taking in the kidnapping last year of 17 missionaries with an Ohio-based charity in Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>“My three kids are now in the U.S.,” Janéus said, “but my wife is with me in Haiti. Although she’s seeing a psychologist, she is still unstable since the kidnapping.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Acquitted 1985 terror bombing: fatally shot
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/14/canada-ripudaman-singh-malik-air-india-1985-bombing
GIST	<p>A man acquitted over the bombing of a 1985 Air India flight from Montreal to Mumbai has been killed in Canada, in what police believe was a targeted shooting.</p> <p>The family of Ripudaman Singh Malik confirmed the 70-year-old was shot and killed Thursday morning in front of his clothing import business.</p> <p>Police were called to a Surrey, British Columbia neighborhood following reports of gunfire. They found a man with a gunshot wound.</p> <p>“The man was provided first aid by attending officers until emergency health services took over his care,” constable Sarbjit Sangha said in a news release. “The injured man succumbed to his injuries on scene.”</p> <p>Police did not release the name of the victim, but family confirmed Malik’s identity.</p> <p>In 1985, 329 people died when Air India flight 182 exploded off the coast of Ireland. It was due to stop over at Heathrow before going on to Delhi and eventually Mumbai.</p> <p>The terror attack is the worst act of mass murder in Canadian history. Among the victims were 280 Canadians and 86 children. A second bomb targeting another plane killed two baggage handlers after it detonated at Tokyo’s Narita airport before it was loaded on to an Air India plane.</p> <p>Crown prosecutors previously argued the bombing of Air India was masterminded by Sikh extremists in British Columbia as retaliation for the the Indian army’s raid of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sikhism’s holiest shrine, in 1984 that killed hundreds of Sikh pilgrims.</p> <p>In 2005, Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri were acquitted of mass murder and conspiracy charges in connection to the Air India bombing. A judge determined that two key witnesses used by the crown were unreliable. Following his acquittal, Malik unsuccessfully sued the government for C\$9.2m, alleging the crown knew of deficiencies in its case but nonetheless pursued charges under pressure from the public.</p> <p>Only one person was ever convicted for the bombing. Inderjit Singh Reyat served 30 years for lying during two trials, including Malik’s, and for helping to make the bombs in his Vancouver Island home. He was released in 2016.</p> <p>Canadian authorities believe Talwinder Singh Parmar was the architect of the attack. He was shot and killed by Indian police in 1992.</p> <p>In the years since, Malik, a previous supporter of the Sikh separatist Khalistan movement, has held leadership roles with a credit union and network of Khalsa schools.</p> <p>Police found a burnt-out vehicle 2km from the scene of the shooting, which they believe was one of the getaway vehicles. Police say a second vehicle may have been involved. No arrests have been made.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Administration warns: criminal drone threat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/14/biden-administration-warns-criminal-drone-threat-a/

GIST

Biden administration officials warned Congress on Thursday that dangerous uses of drones are on the rise, and they want lawmakers to provide additional authority for the federal government to combat the drones.

Deputy assistant attorney general Brad Wiegman told the Senate Homeland Security Committee that lawmakers need to expand powers granted to the government in 2018 but lapsing later this year.

“We’re seeing an increase in the use of drones for a wide spectrum of criminal and other dangerous activities,” Mr. Wiegman told the panel Thursday. “They can be weaponized to conduct attacks using firearms, explosives or other materials. They can conduct cyberattacks against wireless devices or networks. And they can conduct espionage or traffic in narcotics and contraband.”

The Biden administration has made a “Domestic Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems National Action Plan,” under which it wants to reauthorize and expand counter-drone authorities provided to the Defense, Homeland Security, Justice and State departments, plus some authorities for the CIA and NASA.

The plan aims to expand where government officials can fight the drones, which officials may do so, and how to do it lawfully.

Homeland Security acting assistant secretary Samantha Vinograd said her agency has watched the threat from drones grow in recent months.

“The threat landscape from drones is heightened and, candidly, escalating extremely fast,” Ms. Vinograd said. “Drones have been used to conduct dangerous kinetic attacks, have interfered with aircrafts and airports, have been used to survey, disrupt, and damage critical infrastructure and services, and more.”

Ms. Vinograd said U.S. Customs and Border Protection detected more than 8,000 illegal cross-border drone flights at the southern border since August 2021.

Sen. Rob Portman, Ohio Republican, pressed Ms. Vinograd on how many of those flights were stopped and she said she would check with the Border Patrol officials.

“We’ve been asking them for this since February, persistently, and we are not getting the information,” Mr. Portman said. “I think it’s important we have an authorization but we have to have information.”

Democrats shared fears of how drones could be weaponized in an attack on Americans too.

“If we do not act, it could only be a matter of time before someone who is recklessly operating this technology causes an accident that can have catastrophic effects,” said Sen. Gary Peters, Michigan Democrat, at the hearing.

“As we work to avoid unintentional disasters, we must also account for the escalating threat of weaponized drones from terrorists and criminal organizations who can launch domestic drone attacks on mass gatherings, high profile landmarks and buildings, or federal property,” he said.

In written testimony to the committee, Mr. Wiegman said the FBI has conducted 70 drone detection and counter-drone operations at large events, such as the Super Bowl and the New Year’s Eve celebrations in Times Square in New York.

The FBI attempted to stop 50 of the 974 drones it detected in those operations.

He said these operations represented “only 0.05% of the over 121,000 events” for which state, local, and federal officials sought assistance or an assessment regarding counter-drone support from the government.

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HEADLINE 07/14 Obstacle: young offenders restitution debts

SOURCE <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/us/politics/juvenile-restitution-debts.html>

WASHINGTON — Arabella Guevara spent much of her adolescence paying for her mistakes.

She entered the juvenile justice system at 13, after she ran away from home for the first time, hoping to escape a volatile relationship with her mother. Before long, running away escalated to petty theft, then stealing cars and breaking into homes. It cost her nearly two years spent in and out of juvenile facilities, and many additional months still tied to the system through probation.

When her final stint on probation ended last year and her juvenile record was sealed because she had turned 18, “It was like a whole chapter of my life that had been closed,” Ms. Guevara said in an interview. “I was free.”

But before long she began receiving monthly reminders that she was anything but. Bills totaling \$60,000 in restitution owed for her crimes began pouring in, drowning the teenager in debt just as she had started trying to get back on her feet.

Ms. Guevara, now 19, is one of thousands of teenagers and young adults across the country paying restitution imposed by juvenile courts to compensate their victims for losses and damages related to their crimes. But [a new report examining the practice](#) asserts that many are paying into a broken system — one that often derails the lives of the young offenders the juvenile system was created to rehabilitate, all the while delaying or even denying compensation to their victims.

The report, published Thursday by Juvenile Law Center, a national legal aid and advocacy group based in Philadelphia, sheds light on a rarely scrutinized process through which juvenile offenders can become trapped in a perpetual cycle of debts owed to society.

Ms. Guevara has been off probation for more than a year; she has had no encounters with the police. She is the mother of a newborn boy, and works at an [advocacy organization](#) in her hometown, San Jose, Calif., helping at-risk youth stay out of the criminal justice system.

“I have to pay for a crime that I’ve already paid for, and I can’t afford it,” Ms. Guevara said. “It’s like society has deemed us as unworthy of redemption.”

While the imposition of similarly burdensome [fines and fees](#) on juvenile offenders and their families has drawn attention from policymakers in recent years, advocates and lawyers say the restitution system has proved more difficult to reform. That’s in part because that system is built on a false premise, they say.

“The theory of restitution is to make the victim whole, and there’s also supposed to be a lesson to the child that their actions have consequences,” said Nicole El, the assistant chief of the Children and Youth Justice Unit in Philadelphia’s public defender’s office. “What it does in practice is handcuff children and their families financially.”

The Juvenile Law Center report, which examined youth restitution laws in all 56 states and U.S. territories, does not quantify how many young people owe restitution from year to year. But it found a patchwork of policies that the report’s authors described as delivering [“justice by geography,”](#) burdening indigent youth with little to no income with debts that many will never pay or finish paying. And although the system was created in the 1960s as a way to offer mostly white juvenile offenders an alternative to jail, it now largely burdens poor youth of color, who are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.

Every juvenile court across the country has the right to order restitution — usually imposed for crimes such as property damage and theft — but the way amounts are determined varies wildly, as does enforcement, the report found.

Eleven states and territories mandate restitution when any quantifiable damages are assessed, while the rest leave it up to a judge’s discretion. Only five states and three territories cap the restitution a young offender can be ordered to pay, the report found. Those who cannot pay end up facing a range of penalties — including incarceration, extended probation and the inability to expunge their records — that can keep

young people entangled in the system well beyond the length of their sentences. In one of the most extreme policies, the report found, juvenile courts in Washington State can retain jurisdiction over young people until they turn 28, and can extend a restitution judgment by 10 additional years for collection purposes.

But the report also pointed to an equally worrisome outcome: the system rarely works as intended for crime victims themselves. In states that report restitution collections, none reported more than a third of such payments actually being collected. One study cited in the report found that as much as 77 percent of all restitution ordered goes uncollected.

Fourteen jurisdictions order restitution to be paid to third parties, such as government agencies and insurance companies, while others require young people to pay into state victim compensation funds, which are difficult for many victims to access.

Victims' rights groups also see shortcomings in the system. The National Center for Victims of Crime said in a statement that while it believes financial compensation is an important part of the "restorative process" for crime survivors, it also believes that "imposing high restitution costs on juveniles who are justice involved can unintentionally cause more harm by creating barriers to release and services."

"In addition," the statement said, "we know that the majority of youth who are justice involved have histories of trauma and victimization, and a large financial obligation may cause even more harm. We would encourage communities to engage with both survivors and justice-involved youth to determine a process that is fair and restorative to all parties."

The Juvenile Law Center is advocating several reforms, including alternatives such as diversion programs with a [restorative justice](#) approach and expanding the eligibility for state victim compensation funds.

Maine [passed legislation in 2019](#) that reformed its juvenile restitution system and is showing results, legal experts say. The new statutes now presume that people younger than 16 are not able to pay restitution, allow for a juvenile offender's restitution to be reduced or wiped clean should their circumstances change and require payments to go directly to victims rather than corporations like insurance companies.

As a result, youth offenders in their 20s have been able to leave the juvenile system after having their restitution balances discharged, said Christopher Northrop, a clinical professor at the University of Maine School of Law, who also leads a legal aid clinic that helped advocate the changes. Younger offenders, who are allowed to perform community service and other restorative justice activities in lieu of payment, have seen their cases resolved more quickly.

"It has eliminated the collateral consequence of system involvement for young people so they can get on with their lives," said Jill Ward, an adjunct professor at the Law School and director of the Maine Center for Juvenile Policy and Law.

More than 30 states do not require courts to consider whether a youth can pay. Some expressly prohibit them from doing so, which the report said can present crippling obstacles to youth as they transition to adulthood. They can face garnished wages, including from their commissary accounts while in juvenile detention and their paychecks when they are employed.

Some laws allow unpaid restitution to accrue interest, and turn into a civil liability, which can in turn wreak havoc on credit scores and other public records of consequence.

Ultimately, the report found, "this means a child from a well-off family who can easily pay off restitution gets a clean slate as they leave the system, while a child from a poor family is stuck with a record of juvenile justice involvement for no reason other than poverty."

In some states, such as California, where Ms. Guevara lives, the financial responsibility falls to the parents if a youth cannot pay.

Since being released from juvenile detention, Ms. Guevara has been living with her mother off and on; though their relationship has remained rocky, they have survived homelessness and eviction together, and Ms. Guevara did not want to further burden her.

After receiving notices threatening to take them both to court, she began paying \$7 per month to the state, which is what she can afford while working part time for \$20 an hour and paying her bills.

Her restitution payments are supposed to cover medical bills for the injuries one victim suffered when she tried to prevent Ms. Guevara from stealing her car; fees to change security systems and locks in the homes she invaded; and damage to the cars that she stole.

The philosophy that “you do the crime, you pay the fine” is pervasive in courts, advocates say, but it undermines the very point of a system that is supposed to be redemptive, rather than punitive, as the adult system is, Ms. El said.

She and other public defenders often find themselves performing a balancing act in trying to advocate for their clients, she said, many of whom come from households with incomes under \$10,000 a year. “We don’t want victims to be out thousands and thousands of dollars — we’re people like everyone else — but we’re also representing children,” Ms. El said. “And is it reasonable that children can pay back thousands of dollars? It is not.”

In studies cited in the report, interviews with victims eligible for restitution found that very few seek monetary compensation from juvenile offenders.

Moreover, state-reported data reviewed by the Juvenile Law Center shows that those victims who do seek restitution from young offenders rarely succeed in collecting it. For example, in a 2017 study conducted in Alabama, only 15 percent of the restitution fees related to juvenile cases were eventually collected.

Ms. Guevara said she thinks about her victims often, particularly an elderly man whose car she stole. She later found out he was a retired sheriff. He visited her in a juvenile facility and was so disturbed at the sight of her in shackles that he requested they be removed.

Sitting across from her, the former sheriff, who declined to be interviewed for this article, said all he wanted was to know what had happened in her life that brought her to that night, and a promise from her that she would work toward righting her path.

These days, she said, keeping that promise feels ever more elusive.

The two-bedroom apartment Ms. Guevara shared with her mother and four others felt too crowded recently, and tensions began running high. Determined not to expose her son to the tumult that characterized her own childhood, she found herself on the move again.

The same week she became homeless, her restitution was abruptly raised to \$100 per month — or, by Ms. Guevara’s calculation, four packs of diapers and three of baby formula.

“I was doing good, just trying to do the right thing, and it’s not enough for them,” she said. “It’s like I’m locked up again.”

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HEADLINE	07/14 Lynnwood drive-by shooting injures 2
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/lynnwood-police-investigating-drive-by-shooting-that-left-2-juveniles-hurt
GIST	LYNNWOOD, Wash. — Lynnwood police were searching for clues after two minors were shot Thursday evening during a drive-by shooting in the city, the second such shooting in as many days.

	<p>Police were called shortly before 9:30 p.m. to the 16800 block of 36th Avenue W., on a report of gunfire. When they arrived, they found the victims.</p> <p>Police said the injuries of the two victims were life threatening but did not disclose any other information about their wounds.</p> <p>Several officers arrived at the scene to investigate the shooting.</p> <p>Police did not immediately say if a suspect was in custody or identified.</p> <p>It was not clear if the shooting was targeted or random.</p> <p>The drive-by shooting was the second in as many days in roughly the same area.</p> <p>On Wednesday, deputies from the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office were investigating a drive-by shooting that occurred at the intersection of 36th Avenue W. and 164th Street SW as a group of teens were walking on the sidewalk when two of them were shot.</p> <p>Investigators said the shooting was not random.</p> <p>"We do believe this is gang-related and do believe that parties are known to each other," said Courtney O'Keefe, spokeswoman for the sheriff's office, said Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 SPD: naked man, 20 shots, car crash
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-investigating-incident-involving-naked-man-20-gunshots-and-a-car-crash
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A wanted robbery suspect who was shot but later fled on foot from a Seattle hospital in the nude is back in custody and police are investigating the Thursday afternoon shooting in which nearly two dozen bullets were fired that left him wounded and a two-car crash that occurred during the melee.</p> <p>The incident involved two different crime scenes in Seattle and at least one man who suffered gun shot wounds during the incident, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>A 29-year-old man, who has not been identified, was being treated for a non-life-threatening leg injury at Harborview Medical Center, police said in a written statement. He was expected to be transferred to the South Correctional Entity jail in Des Moines in connection with an outstanding warrant for a second-degree robbery charge.</p> <p>Seattle police did not say if the suspect will face charges in connection with the car crash or the shooting that left him wounded.</p> <p>According to the police statement, callers dialed 911 at 3:30 p.m. to report gunfire near 27th Avenue and E. Spring Street.</p> <p>When police arrived, they found 20 shell casings at the scene along with bystanders who said there were several cars that fled from the scene after the shooting, including a red BMW.</p> <p>Investigators said they also found two guns at the scene.</p> <p>Investigators said a few minutes later police officers were called to 17th Avenue and E. Madison Street for a crash involving the BMW and another vehicle.</p> <p>Police said the driver of the vehicle stayed at the scene and spoke to police, who were told that the BMW's driver informed witnesses at that second scene that he had been shot.</p>

	<p>A third car arrived at the crash scene and picked up the BMW's driver, who was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment of a gunshot wound to the leg.</p> <p>Police went to the hospital to interview the gunshot victim, who initially lied about his identity and then ran from the hospital wearing just a hospital gown. Police later found the man hiding in a nearby dumpster and was fully nude.</p> <p>A passerby flagged down officers to alert them about the naked man running down the street, which is how police found him.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 WSP: alarming trend shooting incidents
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/state-troopers-say-shooting-incidents-2022-have-already-surpassed-2021-numbers/Y235VTRUQBNDINDJHCQB555Z4OY/
GIST	<p>So far this year, Washington State Patrol troopers in Pierce and Thurston counties have responded to more than 40 shooting incidents. According to Trooper Robert Reyer, in 2021 there were only 30.</p> <p>“That’s an alarming trend when we compare it to last year,” said Reyer. “One thing leads to the other, then all of a sudden we have an escalation that can lead up to people getting shot at.”</p> <p>Flames, smoke, and sirens could be seen Wednesday along Interstate 5 in Fife after a stolen car was shot at and rammed off an overpass. Later that day around dinnertime, three cars traveling southbound on I-5 opened fire at one another. One of those cars had four children sitting in the back.</p> <p>The road rage continued into Thursday, with DOT cameras capturing the aftermath of a drive-by shooting on Highway 18 near Weyerhaeuser Way. A car window was blown out and cuts from all that broken glass sent one person to the hospital.</p> <p>“It seems like people have almost forgotten how to act properly around one another,” said Reyer. “People are just, it seems less patient than they were before COVID.”</p> <p>Washington State Patrol is engaging in more proactive patrols to combat this. Reyer says these cases are not easy to follow because witnesses and leads are not easy to track down. He asks drivers who witness road rage to take down license plates and contact 911.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Western WA 3rd highway shooting in 24hrs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/road-rage-shooting-sr-18-federal-way/281-8be61f6c-2039-44b9-99f0-10b8f08b37b3
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash. — One person was injured in a potential road rage shooting on State Route 18 in Federal Way Thursday morning.</p> <p>The shooting happened at about 10:25 a.m.</p> <p>The driver of a Honda Civic told Washington State Patrol that she was driving southbound on Interstate 5 near the Enchanted Parkway/SR 18 exit and another car was driving erratically next to her. The driver in the suspect vehicle allegedly gave the victim the middle finger before pulling ahead of the victim and drastically slowing down.</p> <p>The cars started traveling eastbound on SR 18, and the suspect vehicle pulled next to the victim.</p> <p>A passenger fired a gun at her before fleeing, according to Washington State Patrol.</p>

	<p>A bullet shattered the glass of the victim's driver's side window, traveling through the Civic and exiting through the passenger window. The bullet "narrowly" missed the victim, according to WSP.</p> <p>A shard of glass from the broken window cut the driver on her head and neck. She was taken to the hospital.</p> <p>Police are searching for the two suspects and the suspect vehicle, which is described as an older off-white passenger car. The driver is described as a slender woman in her 20s with shoulder-length hair. The passenger is described as a slender male with short hair and a white t-shirt.</p> <p>This is at least the third highway shooting in two days on western Washington roadways.</p> <p>A driver reported their car was shot at on I-5 near South 200th Street in SeaTac on Wednesday morning. The driver said another car was tailgating them and pulled along the passenger side before shooting what appeared to be a handgun.</p> <p>The back passenger window shattered, and the suspect fled.</p> <p>Police determined a pellet gun was used in the shooting.</p> <p>Later on Wednesday, the occupants of two vehicles exchanged gunfire on I-5 north of State Route 900 in King County. In that incident, two cars entered traffic from the shoulder. The occupant of a Kia fired shots at a Dodge Charger with children inside. The driver of the Dodge Charger then fired a shot at the Kia.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 Man threatened US Rep Jayapal is out of jail
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-arrested-for-allegedly-threatening-to-kill-u-s-rep-pramila-jayapal-released-from-jail/
GIST	<p>A 48-year-old Seattle man arrested Saturday on suspicion of committing a hate crime against U.S. Rep. Pramila Jayapal was released from jail Wednesday. Seattle police released him because they could not say with certainty that he told the congresswoman to go back to India or that he threatened to kill her, according to King County prosecutors.</p> <p>Seattle police on Wednesday obtained a temporary Extreme Risk Protection Order — commonly known as an ERPO — to require the man to surrender his firearms and concealed pistol license, citing concerns about his escalating behavior toward Jayapal and increasing struggles with his mental health, court records show.</p> <p>The police investigation is ongoing. Prosecutors have not declined to file a criminal case but don't currently have evidence to prove a hate crime was committed, said Casey McNerthney, a spokesperson for the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.</p> <p>Prosecutors have 72 hours, not including holidays and weekends, to file criminal charges against a person in custody. If charges are not filed within that time, the person must be released from jail. Prosecutors are also ethically bound not to file charges unless they have evidence to prove to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that a person committed the crime they are accused of.</p> <p>"The recent incident outside Rep. Pramila Jayapal's Seattle home is disturbing and unacceptable. In a time of increased political violence, security concerns against any elected official should be taken seriously, as we are doing here," McNerthney wrote in an email Wednesday.</p> <p>"The suspect's alleged language and actions, coupled with his possession of a concealed weapon, deserve the full attention of the justice system. Presently, the investigation is ongoing and our office is working with police investigators to make sure we understand the full extent of the suspect's actions to build the strongest case possible," the email said.</p>

Jayapal, 56, is a former state senator who became the first Indian American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016. A Democrat, Jayapal represents Washington's 7th Congressional District, which includes most of Seattle. Jayapal was born in India and came to the U.S. at 16 to attend college at Georgetown University.

"We are glad the extreme risk protection order was obtained," a spokesperson for Jayapal said in an email.

Seattle police arrested the man outside Jayapal's house in the Arbor Heights neighborhood at 11:25 p.m. Saturday after she called 911 and reported an unknown person or people were in a vehicle outside, using obscene language, according to the probable cause statement released after the man's first court appearance Monday. She told a dispatcher her husband thought someone may have fired a pellet gun, but he wasn't sure, the statement said.

Officers found the man standing in the middle of the street with his hands in the air and a .40-caliber handgun holstered on his waist, the probable cause statement said. Police detained the man and secured the gun.

A neighbor told police she heard the man yell something to the effect of, "Go back to India. I'm going to kill you," the statement said. The neighbor also saw and heard the man drive by Jayapal's residence at least three times, yelling profanities, according to the statement.

A detective was assigned to conduct a follow-up investigation and met with Jayapal's husband, who provided video clips from their home-security system, according to the ERPO petition. In one clip, the last part of the word "India" can be heard, followed by an expletive-laced rant directed at Jayapal, the petition said. In another clip, the man can be seen approaching the house while yelling profanities about being Jayapal's neighbor, followed by the sound of metal being manipulated.

The detective could not be sure if the sound was from a handgun being racked or if it was from the clang of metal tent poles as the man tried to erect a tent on Jayapal's property, the petition said.

Police learned the man sent an email to Jayapal's public account in January, saying he didn't like her because of her "perceived political wrongdoings," the petition said. He has also driven by her house and shouted obscenities at her multiple times since late June, according to the petition.

The petition notes the man told officers he wanted to purchase an assault-style rifle for protection but denied saying anything about Jayapal's ethnicity or threatening to kill her.

In an interview with police, the man's mother said in the week leading up to his arrest, her son had been feverish and hadn't been eating or sleeping, according to the petition. He was also struggling with pain from a workplace injury and with managing his mental health and associated medications, the petition said. The man's mother told police it was not a good idea for her son to have access to guns, and she was concerned he could harm himself.

Within 14 days of a temporary ERPO being issued, a full hearing is held before a judge and a respondent can challenge the ERPO, provide testimony and call witnesses. The judge then decides whether to deny or grant a permanent ERPO, which bars the respondent from owning or purchasing firearms for one year.

Under state law, a hate crime — formerly called malicious harassment — is a Class C felony defined as intentionally injuring, damaging property or threatening someone because of their perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or mental, physical or sensory disability.

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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/oregon-murder-conviction-overturned-because-black-jurors-were-excluded/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals has overturned the 2018 murder conviction of a Portland man after finding that prosecutors dismissed two men from the jury pool because they were Black.</p> <p>The jury, which had no Black members, found Darian L. McWoods, a Black man, guilty of murder by abuse in the death of his 15-month-old daughter, Kamaya Flores, in Multnomah County Circuit Court, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.</p> <p>In the ruling released Wednesday, Presiding Judge Josephine Mooney found that Multnomah County Senior Deputy District Attorney Amanda Nadell offered race-neutral reasons to strike both prospective jurors, but those arguments were only a “pretext.”</p> <p>Mooney wrote that the state did not seek to strike similarly situated jurors who were not Black.</p> <p>“Racial discrimination in the selection of jurors is harmful,” Mooney wrote.</p> <p>McWoods’ defense attorney Josephine Townsend challenged both dismissals under the “Batson” rule, referring to a 1986 U.S. Supreme Court decision prohibiting the exclusion of prospective jurors based on their race.</p> <p>In a statement, Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office spokesperson Elisabeth Shepard said the Court of Appeals opinion would be used “to further educate and inform our role in the administration of justice.”</p> <p>“We are committed to the ongoing pursuit of a safer, more equitable system,” she said.</p> <p>Unless the Oregon Department of Justice appeals the overturned conviction to the state Supreme Court, the case will return to Circuit Court, where it could be retried or dismissed.</p> <p>McWood, who maintained his innocence throughout the trial, is serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole after 25 years. Prosecutors accused him of killing his daughter by a methadone overdose, saying he was a drug user who sometimes mixed his drugs into kid-friendly drinks such as Capri Sun.</p> <p>Townsend suggested the drugs could have been left in a shared bedroom by another family member.</p> <p>“I know that my client is really looking forward to a retrial, and I’m really hoping that we get the right results,” she said.</p> <p>He remains in custody at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute in Pendleton.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/14 California: biggest seizure fentanyl pills
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-pills-seized-in-dea-bust-near-los-angeles/
GIST	<p>Approximately one million pills laced with fentanyl were seized in a bust near Los Angeles earlier this month, according to federal authorities. It marks the biggest seizure of fentanyl pills in California history, authorities said.</p> <p>The Drug Enforcement Administration reported Thursday that the raid occurred on July 5 at a home in Inglewood, a city just south of Los Angeles. The pills have an estimated street value of between \$15 and \$20 million, officials said.</p> <p>The pills were “intended for retail distribution,” the DEA said.</p>

This comes after what may have been the largest fentanyl seizure in history last week at a warehouse in Culiacan, Mexico, where authorities said they found a half-ton of fentanyl with an estimated street value of \$230 million.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 107,000 drug overdose deaths in the U.S. in 2021, with synthetic opioids accounting for about 71,000 of those.

Experts say fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, can be 50 times more powerful than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine.

"This massive seizure disrupted the flow of dangerous amounts of fentanyl into our streets and probably saved many lives," DEA Special Agent in Charge Bill Bodner said in a statement Thursday. "The deceptive marketing coupled with the ease of accessibility makes these small and seemingly innocuous pills a significant threat to the health and safety of all our communities. A staggering number of teens and young adults are unaware that they are ingesting fentanyl in these fake pills and are being poisoned."

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HEADLINE	07/14 Philadelphia: 2 shootings injure 5 children
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/tot-children-wounded-quadruple-shootings-philadelphia/story?id=86811128
GIST	<p>Five children, including a toddler, were wounded in two quadruple shootings that erupted overnight in Philadelphia, according to police.</p> <p>At least three adults, including a woman believed to be the toddler's mother, were critically injured in the shootings, authorities said.</p> <p>The first shooting unfolded about 10:30 p.m. Tuesday in West Philadelphia, when at least one shooter opened fire on a Kia SUV occupied by two women and the two young children, Philadelphia Police Chief Inspector Scott Small said during a news conference.</p> <p>Small said 10 shots were fired at the parked vehicle, critically injuring the two women in the front seat and injuring the toddler, a 2-year-old boy, sitting next to his big brother in the backseat. He said the toddler was shot in the leg, while a woman in the driver's seat, believed to be the child's mother, was shot in the head and critically injured.</p> <p>The other woman seated in the front passenger seat was also critically wounded, Small said. He said a 26-year-old man believed to have been standing outside the vehicle when the barrage of shots were fired was hit in the leg by a bullet and taken to a hospital in critical condition.</p> <p>"In this Kia, in addition to the three victims, there was a 6-year-old boy also in the backseat," Small said. "He's lucky since this vehicle was hit 10 times by gunfire and three of the other passengers were all struck by gunfire."</p> <p>Investigators believe that following the shooting, the driver of the SUV drove about a block before stopping, according to Small.</p> <p>No arrests have been announced in the shooting and a motive was under investigation.</p> <p>"We don't know if somebody was intentionally firing shots at this vehicle or if it was hit by stray gunfire, but the vehicle clearly has 10 bullet holes in it," Small said.</p> <p>Around 2 p.m. Thursday, four children were shot in front of an apartment building in North Philadelphia, police said. The shooting occurred about two blocks from the Edgar Allan Poe national historic site.</p> <p>Police officers responding to calls of numerous shots fired, found the wounded victims -- a 13-year-old boy, a 14-year-old girl, a 15-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl -- in a courtyard of the apartment complex, authorities said.</p>

Small said at least 21 shots were fired in the direction of the children, but it was unclear if they were the targets of the shootings.

The two girls were both shot in the face and were taken to a hospital in serious condition, police said. The two boys were hospitalized with non-life-threatening wounds to their legs and arms, police said.

Officers recovered a revolver at the scene, but it was not immediately clear if it was used in the shooting, police said.

The episode came as a 10 p.m. summer curfew the city recently imposed on young people under the age of 18 was in effect. The curfew was enacted by city leaders in an attempt to protect children against gun violence. But Small said two of the children were standing just outside their apartments when they were shot and two others were friends.

"They were just a few feet from the front door on the courtyard, right in front of the house where two of the victims lived," Small said. "The other two we believe were just visiting, they were friends, when someone fired at least 21 shots in the direction of these teenagers, striking all four."

The two shootings occurred amid a violent streak on the streets of Philadelphia, including a June 4 mass shooting that left three people dead and 11 injured in the city's South Street entertainment district.

The Philadelphia police department's most recent crime statistics show that as of July 10 there have been 2,233 shooting incidents in the city this year, a 6.9% increase from the same period in 2021.

As of Wednesday, the city had recorded 290 homicides, 2% fewer than at this time last year, the statistics show. Philadelphia had 562 homicides in 2021, breaking a record set in 2020.

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